

UNCANNY, SPOOKY, CREEPY TALES

August

# Ghost STORIES

25¢

The  
Experienced  
Ghost by  
H. G. WELLS

My Phantom Pal

The Specter in  
the New Hotel

THE WOMAN OF WHITE LADDER *by* Edgar Allan Poe *Illustration by* John R. Neill

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AVAILABLE AT SEVEN CENTS PER COPY FROM THE PUBLISHER



Vol. 7

AUGUST, 1929

No. 2

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# Young Man Play Fair With Yourself

## Learn the Truth About the Sex Question



**A**T last the truth is written. The great mysteries of sexology torn aside. And now for the first time you can get the real truth about the sex question.

This is an age of plain thinking and frank speech. No longer can a big, vital problem like the sex question be hidden away as a thing to be ashamed of. People are demanding the truth about these things.

And so Bernarr Macfadden has lifted the veil. He has told the truth about mankind's most vital problem in a frank, straightforward-the-shoulder style that will appeal to every man who reads his remarkable book.

### Manhood and Marriage

is a fearless, ringing challenge to prudery and ignorance. It contains the fruits of Bernarr Macfadden's lifelong study of one of the biggest problems confronting the young manhood of the world.

He has had to surmount extraordinary difficulties in the preparation of the book. But the truth is mighty! It can neither be ignored nor suppressed. There was overwhelming need and demand for a fearless, plain-speaking book on sexology. The wall of ignorance that was wrecking millions of lives must be broken down.

The book was written, published and placed on sale. Today in tens of thousands of homes this great work is one of the chief factors in promoting health, strength and happiness.

### Life's Handbook

Manhood and Marriage enters the sanctuary of the most secret phases of your inner life. It grips you with suggestions

that are personal and confidential. It furnishes definite and practical information on vital subjects, pure in themselves, which are frequently surrounded with vulgar mystery.

The problems of man frequently assume tremendous importance. They thus become a source of worries that ultimately assume a tragical nature. And the need for the answer to the query "What shall I do?" often grasps the victim with terrifying intensity.

It is well, therefore, that conditions and problems of this sort should be clearly and emphatically presented. For the outcome may mean success or failure, health or disease, or even life or death. Both single and married men needed to know the facts, so Bernarr Macfadden spent more than a quarter century compiling the authentic information given in this book.

### Send No Money

This big book is so powerful, so crammed full of facts hitherto neglected by old-fashioned sex hygiene that we sincerely believe it should be in the hands of every man. Therefore, we do not hesitate to send it to you upon approval. Yet you need send no money now—just fill out the coupon and mail it today. When the postman delivers the book to you, pay him the regular price \$3.00 plus the few cents delivery charges. Take five days to examine it thoroughly. If, at the end of that time, you do not agree that Manhood and Marriage is worth much more than its cost, return it to us and your \$3.00 will be refunded.

## READ

### these Chapter Headings

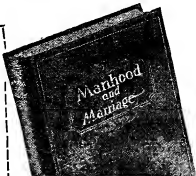
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The Troublesome Prostate  
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Men

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# Enjoy Perfect Vision without these eye crutches

## Thousands Are Throwing Their Glasses Away

### Why Don't You-

### You Can

**G**LASSES are only eye crutches. They simply bolster up the eyes—they cannot cure or eliminate the conditions responsible for the trouble. They are useful just as crutches are useful for an injured leg, but they can no more restore your eyes to their former strength than crutches can mend a broken limb. The real help must come from other sources. In the case of the eyes it is exercise.

Over 20 years ago Bernard Macfadden, father of Physical Culture, had a most trying experience with his eyes. Due to many nights of hard literary work under poor artificial light, they became terribly strained. The idea of wearing glasses was intolerable, so always willing to back up his theories by experimenting upon himself, he immediately started in upon a course of natural treatment that he fully believed would help him.

The results were so entirely satisfactory that he associated himself with one of the few really great eye specialists and together they entered upon a period of research and experiment covering many years.

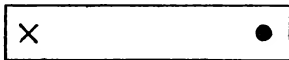
#### A Startling Revolutionary System of Eye Training

Upon his findings has been based a remarkable new scientific system of eye-training which quickly enables you to train these muscles of the eye so that you can make them work properly at all times, and without effort or strain. This new system has been prepared by Bernard Macfadden, in collaboration with the eminent ophthalmologist who discovered the real truth about eyes.



Although this remarkable system has only recently been introduced to the public, it has been in use for more than twenty years, and it has been conclusively proven of inestimable value.

If you already wear glasses, find out how you can discard your glasses—and see better without them. If you do not wear glasses, but feel that your sight is failing, then find out how a few minutes each day assures you perfect sight without the use of



#### Make This Test of Your Eyesight

Do you know that there is a spot in your eye where you are totally blind? Prove it now. Hold this diagram about 10 inches directly before you. Close the left eye, and fix the right eye on the cross. Then bring the diagram gradually closer and at about 7 inches the black spot will suddenly disappear. This is but one of the important points of information about your eyes which you should know, particularly if you have any eye trouble.

glasses. If you are a parent send at once for this method, and learn how to save your children from the scourge of near-sightedness, how you can save them from the slavery of eye-glasses, and how you can train their eyes so they will always have perfect, normal vision.

#### For What Price Would You Sell Your Eyes?

The benefits which you can derive from this new method of eye training may seem too surprising to be true. Yet you cannot doubt its efficacy when you read the letters from the people who have found it of immeasurable value, when you know that it has helped over 2,000 children to regain normal vision in a short time. Your eyesight is your most important possession. It can never be replaced if it is lost. And since no amount of money could make you sacrifice your eyes, you owe it to yourself at least to investigate what this new scientific method can do for you.

Here is a man who writes: "Strengthening the Eyes has enabled me to completely forget the optician. It has practically cured a bad case of astigmatism."

And here is another who says: "By faithfully following the directions given in your Eye Course I have discarded glasses worn for years, and have had absolutely no trouble for the past two years."

Another grateful reader of this helpful book writes: "I had been wearing glasses since I was eight years of age and could not go a day without them. I am now twenty-four and with just a little effort in practicing the Eye Exercises each day for a period of two months, I have been able to stop wearing glasses entirely."

These inspiring results bring a message of hope to every one who is troubled with weak eyes or poor sight. There is hardly any condition that is beyond the reach of Bernard Macfadden's revolutionizing method of eye training. Even the hopeless cases, as shown in the letter reproduced here, respond with almost unbelievable results to the treatment outlined by the noted physical culturist.

#### You Can Try This Course At Our Risk

We want every reader of this publication afflicted with eye-trouble to examine Mr. Macfadden's wonderful course and try the eye exercises that it prescribes. In order to bring this about we are willing to send the entire course on approval, giving you the privilege of returning it within five days after receipt if not satisfactory. The price of the course has been placed within the means of everyone—only \$3.00, plus delivery charges. It is less than you would pay for a single pair of glasses. Can you afford not to take advantage of this offer and all it may mean to you? Not if you value strong eyes. So mail the coupon now, before it slips your mind, and you will never have to wear glasses again.

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18

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## The Arlington Street Mystery

—held Los Angeles in a grip of suspense for weeks! Who was the young woman burned alive in the empty house in Arlington Street—and what was the motive for the dreadful crime? The solution of this gripping mystery case, as told by Chief of Detectives H. H. Cline, will be revealed exclusively in

August

### TRUE DETECTIVE MYSTERIES

Also in this issue will appear the following great detective fact thrillers—*The Astounding Swope Poison Case*—*Tracking the Manitou Bandits*—*"Get San Francisco's Million-Dollar Stick-up Man!"*—*Guarding the President of the United States*—*The Vanishing Phantom of Leavenworth*—*Female Bluebeard*, *The Woman Who Murdered Twenty*—*The Crimson Trail of Capital Punishment*—*"Find the Man With the Limp!"*—*Left by the Tide*, the thrilling detective case of the kidnapping and murder of beautiful Ida Kramer, in New Jersey, that aroused the whole countryside—and others, by America's leading detectives and police officials.

The Magazine of Fact  
—TRUE DETECTIVE MYSTERIES—

A Macfadden publication—25c at all news stands the 15th of every month—30c in Canada.

## The Amazing Denton Murder Mystery

The wealthy Denton, after moving to Los Angeles from Arizona in 1920, mysteriously vanished. Months later, his body was found buried in the basement of his mansion. Who did it? For the key to this riddle read the astounding true account of the Denton case—*The Great Wilshire Mystery*—in the September issue of *THE MASTER DETECTIVE*, on sale August 23rd. And don't miss the other great fact mysteries—illustrated with actual photographs—including *The Vanishing Priest of San Francisco*, *Chicago's Murder Castle*, *The Riddle of the Secret Graveyard* and others by America's master criminologists.

*THE MASTER DETECTIVE* is a Macfadden publication, twenty-five cents in the United States; thirty cents in Canada.

## AIR TALES

Scott Erle leaned over his cowl as he flew above the Sun-sand gold mine and saw what he feared—the horde of raiders preparing to swoop down on the mine's unwarned defenders and butcher them all, men, women and children, in a frenzy of lust for gold. How was this fearless skyman to thwart this merciless mob single-handed?

In J. M. Hoffman's roving yarn *The Sky Snare*, one of the most thrilling stories you have ever read, stirring situation after stirring situation marches across the page to grip and hold you. It appears in the August issue of *FLYING STORIES*, the popular Macfadden air magazine. Be sure to read it! Also, *Gangsters of the Air*, *Cupid's Wings*, *Congo Cargo* and several more stories will delight you. In this number the second lesson in the ground course will appear. Don't miss the August issue of *FLYING STORIES*, on the news stands July 23rd. Twenty-five cents; thirty cents in Canada.

## HERE IT IS! THE ONLY ONE OF ITS KIND! FOR AIR-MINDED BOYS AND GIRLS!

MODEL AIRPLANE NEWS is a magazine devoted chiefly to model building. Each issue will contain complete instructions on how to build a model of one of our great history-making airplanes.

In the July number is the Trimotor Ford Monoplane, "Floyd Bennett," made famous by Commander Byrd, who named it after his friend and then took it into the Arctic with him, where it now is.

Not only does this unusual magazine give full instructions for building this great ship, but it also contains full-size working plans, which make it impossible for the builder to go wrong.

### BUILD AND FLY THIS WONDERFUL MODEL OF BYRD'S PLANE!

Also, in the July issue, will be found the start of an absorbing serial, *The Flying Black Sheep*, by Laurence Donovan, and a thrilling story of the Royal Northwestern Mounted Police, *The Man They Didn't Get*, together with other interesting and instructive fact articles on model building and aviation.

### GET YOUR COPY EARLY!

MODEL AIRPLANE NEWS is a Macfadden publication. On all newsstands June 15. Price only 15c.

## Can You Explain This Strange Phenomenon?

Doctors said Christian Henry couldn't have hydrophobia. Rigid tests proved they were right. Yet he had all the symptoms of that dread disease and he died in terrible agony. These are the facts of the amazing story, *He Gave Himself Hydrophobia*, appearing in the Aug.-Sept. issue of *TRUE STRANGE STORIES*. What was the explanation of this phenomenon?

*The Hoodoo Car That Started a World War* is one of the most startling revelations *TRUE STRANGE STORIES* has yet published. Was it simply coincidence? Or did some evil genius actually hang over the car in which the Archduke Francis Ferdinand of Austria was riding when he was assassinated? The story traces the tragic and mysterious career of the death car from the day of the Archduke's assassination down to the day of its destruction. This is a story you will never forget.

Down in Merremac Valley, in Missouri, everybody loved Mrs. Bertha Gifford because she was so good and kind. She was always on hand when there was sickness and was one of the chief mourners at every funeral. Nobody thought to wonder why nearly all her patients died until— But read for yourself, *They Called Her an Angel of Mercy*. You will find it in the Aug.-Sept. issue of *TRUE STRANGE STORIES*.

Also in *TRUE STRANGE STORIES* Aug.-Sept. you'll find many other equally gripping and unusual fact stories about strange people and the strange things they do. You will not find these stories in any other magazine; there is only *one TRUE STRANGE STORIES*. A Macfadden publication on sale at all news stands August second. Twenty-five cents a copy, thirty cents in Canada.

## Plagiarism

Stories have been submitted to this magazine which are copies of stories that have appeared in other magazines.

Anyone submitting a plagiarized story through the mail and receiving and accepting remuneration therefor is guilty of a Federal offense in using the mails to defraud.

The publishers of *GHOST STORIES* are anxious—as are all reputable publishers—to stamp out this form of literary theft and piracy and are advising all magazines from which such stories have been copied of such plagiarism, and are offering to co-operate with the publishers thereof to punish the guilty persons.

Notice is hereby given to all who submit stories that the same must be the original work of the author.



*His lips framed the word! Then with deadly exactness, he hurled it into the silent courtroom. Swift—piercing the air like lightning—it seared her very soul. "A woman whose guilt is ignorance. A woman who does not know her own self!"*

The divorce court! Two wrecked lives! And no matter what the future may hold for her, it can never totally efface the horror of that verdict. The knowledge of its truth—the torturing memories—the vain regrets—are only a result of her own neglect and ignorance. For the vital truths of sex cannot be ignored!

## Womanhood and Marriage

**BERNARR MACFADDEN** has written this book—a book that every wife, wife to be, or mother of a young girl should possess. If only women knew and understood its truths, the innumerable stories of marital unhappiness, separation, divorce, scandal and misery could be erased from the pages of life.

For under every one of these accounts one could truthfully write, "Ignorance again has taken her toll." And the price of ignorance is immeasurable. In many cases, it is life itself!

### Ignorance is no longer Excusable

Until recently there was some excuse for women marrying with no knowledge of the responsibilities of wifehood. Because a vulgar prudery had thrown a dense black wall of ignorance around everything having to do with marriage. A sinister barrier that for years prevented girls and young women from learning before marriage those essential things about life and sex that every woman must know—in order to intelligently become the wife of the man she loves and the mother of beautiful children.

### Complete Knowledge of Sex

Now modern society accepts no excuses. The alibi ignorance carries no weight. For **Bernarr Macfadden's** acclaimed book, "Womanhood and Marriage," unveils the mysteries surrounding sexology for all time. In plain instructive language this book discusses sex—woman's most vital problem. **Bernarr Macfadden** sets forth in clearest detail every particle of information that would be of help to a woman. Nothing is omitted. Unfamiliar medical terms are not used. **Bernarr Macfadden** talks plainly. A spade is called a spade.

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Please send me a copy of "Womanhood and Marriage" under plain cover and I will pay the postman \$3.00 upon receipt, plus delivery charges.

If I do not feel that the book is worth much more than the price charged it is understood that I may return it in perfect condition within five days after I receive it and my money will be refunded immediately and without question. Confident and foreign orders—cash in advance.

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### The Secret of a Happy Marriage

However, keep this fact in mind—there is nothing wrong with marriage—upon marriage is based the home, and the home is the foundation of our nation. Marriage as an institution is the greatest, most wonderful success in all the world. But, like all other great institutions devised by man for the good and protection of the human race, it is subject to a well defined set of natural laws—that must be obeyed. Therein lies the whole secret of happy or unhappy marriage. A great percentage of all the people who marry are entirely ignorant, not only of these natural laws but of the fact that such laws exist. And so, since Nature plays no favorites, grants no immunities, is it any wonder that thousands of couples separate every year, our divorce courts are full to overflowing, and that countless thousands of other "homes" are held together by pride alone?

### For Those Seeking Perfect, Lasting Love

What an amazing book! It breathes with the intense spirit of the age! It reveals the vital sex problems which were in the past hidden behind the veil of hypocrisy. It is a wonderful story of homely truths which will help to bring happiness and love.

How to make love beautiful and lifelong; how to prepare for the greatest moment in woman's life—her wedding day; how to keep the home shining with the wonderful light of happiness; how to protect mental and physical contentment. Never before have you had such an opportunity to avail yourself of information which will guide you to the perfect, lasting love that is every woman's heritage.

Can a woman protect herself from the wolf that lurks around the corner, from pitfalls created by her own passion and ignorance? . . . Yes . . . And, moreover, every woman's dream of a happy home, of a tender husband, or rooms ringing with the gay laughter of children can now be realized. For the truth is mighty. Armed with the facts contained in this great book a woman can guard herself against many of life's greatest dangers. We could write page after page about "Womanhood and Marriage" and not be able to give you an idea as to half of the store of information this treasure of knowledge contains. Rather than try, we are printing the chapter titles for your observation. But even that is not enough. To really know its value you must see it, go through it page by page and learn at first hand just how much it means to you.

### Our Liberal Offer

You need not send any money in advance. Just fill in and mail the coupon below now and the book (in plain wrapper) will be sent to you by return mail. When the postman delivers the

book to you, pay him \$3.00 plus a few cents delivery charges under our money back guarantee as explained in the coupon.

### Read These Chapter Headings

- Womanly Ideals
- Ideal Womanhood
- The Meaning of Sex
- The Mental and Spiritual Significance of Sex
- Am I a Complete Woman?
- The Old Maid
- Choosing a Husband
- Winning a Man's Fitness
- Marriage and the Brink Question
- Personal Habits of the Young Man
- Love and Courtship
- Why Think About Marriage?
- Marriage and Its Alternatives
- When to Marry
- Should a Girl Marry from a Sense of Duty?
- Love-Making and Its Dangers
- The Girl Who Has Made a Mistake
- True Love and Its Expression
- Dancing and Dress
- The Essentials of a Happy Marriage
- The Wedding Preparations
- Physiological Laws of Marriage
- The Physical Relationship of Marriage
- The Basis of Marital Happiness
- Regulating the Relation of Husband and Wife
- Making Love Life-Long
- Mistakes and Excesses that Destroy Love
- The Pros and Cons of Birth Control
- Terrifying and Potentially Influential
- The Requirements of Pregnancy
- Domestic Harmony
- Why Children Are Necessary to Happiness
- The Question of Money
- The Snare of the Boarding House
- The Question of Friends
- Quarreling and Making Up
- Jealousy and the Green-Eyed Guardian of Honor
- When "The Other Woman" Appears
- The Erring Husband
- When Love Seems Dead
- The Divorce Problem
- Physical and Marital Deficiencies
- The Unsatisfactory Husband
- The Frigid Wife
- Mistakes and Excesses that Destroy Love
- Sexual Disorders
- Special Diseases of Women
- Displacements and Their Correction
- Tumors
- Building Glorious and Perfect Womanhood
- Womanly Personality
- Determining Sex
- The Necessity of the Change of Life
- How to Build Vigorous Womanhood
- Preserving and Beautifying the Bust
- Exercise for Womanly Strength

When answering advertisements please mention this magazine

## NICK SANFORD

*Motion-picture  
Acrobat  
and  
Aviator*

YOU would hardly think that a movie "stunt-man", used to repeatedly staking his life on a thousand-to-one gamble with death, would believe in the supernatural—specifically, in *ghosts*.

It sounds a bit queer, even to me—and I happen to be the stunt-man concerned. A little over a year ago, I was a confirmed skeptic. Now that order of things has changed.

Early last summer, "Suicide" Charlie Evans and I were doing hair-raising stunts for motion picture companies in and around Los Angeles and Hollywood. We had belonged to the same air squadron overseas, and at the close of the War had pooled our resources, purchased an old Curtiss Jenny biplane and set out upon a barnstorming career. It was while we were visiting Los Angeles that a director at one of the studios saw our maneuvers and engaged us for a serial his company was about to film.

Thus began our professional movie stunting careers. When we found that there was good money to be made in doubling for stars in risky scenes, we took pains to let producers know that we were qualified to do other things besides 'chute jumps, plane-changing, wing-walking and so on. The team of Charlie Evans and Nick Sanford soon topped the stunt lists in studio casting offices.

So much as a prologue to the strange story that follows.

When Jim Wyndham, a director for the Associated Studios, called us to his office on a morning last May, we were at the peak of our movie careers. Wyndham was at work on a high-powered melodrama that called for several stunts, some of which were highly spectacular and exceedingly risky. Terms were agreed upon, and we became virtually members of the cast.

The picture was to feature Reginald Carter, a handsome and athletic young man who had recently achieved overnight popularity. The story was one of those highly melodramatic



*Jean tried to control the frightened pinto—as the plane swooped down and the rope ladder dangled almost within reach!*

concoctions designed to feature Carter's athletic ability, and bring gasps from the audiences. It was also to be the first "talkie" thriller. Our job or jobs consisted of "doubling" for Carter and other principals in risky shots, and in filling in as minor actors when required. Evans liked this last feature especially, for he had a rather high opinion of his histrionic abilities.

"You give me the ghost of a chance, Jim," he grinned at Wyndham when the papers had been signed, "and I'll show you some acting. Then good-bye to 'Suicide' Charlie Evans, and hail to Charles Evans, the new screen discovery and God's gift to the movies!"

That was Charlie, in speech and spirit.

AND then came Jean Talbot. Miss Talbot, tiny, blond, pretty and vivacious, whom Associated had engaged to play opposite Carter in the new talkie thriller. She was from Texas, the daughter of a wealthy cattleman, and had been discovered by Wyndham while playing ingenue leads with a Los Angeles stock company.

Evans gazed into her wide blue eyes—and was lost. As for me, from the very first, Jean Talbot was the blond incar-



# PHANTOM Pal

*Two daredevil stunt-flyers—partners forever! Neither rivalry in love—  
nor death itself—could end their eternal friendship*



*Behind her came three gunmen, riding like maniacs*

nation of all that was lovely in woman. Miss Talbot, however, was immersed in the task of making good in her screen debut, and probably had no idea that the two cocky young chaps Wyndham introduced her to that day had fallen under her spell.

"Isn't she a dream, Nick?" Charlie raved as we drove home that evening. "I'm goofy about her, and I don't mean perhaps!"

"That so?" I grinned. "Well, you'd better work fast, big boy, for I rather fancy Jean myself!"

Charlie stared at me, and had a good laugh.

"I love that! As if a little runt like you could give Jean Talbot palpitations!"

That epithet "runt" got under my skin.

"Well," I retorted, "I'm going to double for her, at any rate. Laugh that off."

We engaged in some good-natured banter over Miss Talbot that evening, little dreaming what havoc that young lady was to cause. . . .

The next morning found us at the studio, where preparations were being made for the filming of the first outdoor scenes of the picture. And that afternoon Evans and I set

out flying eastward toward Barstow in our old Jenny. Sam Foster, another pilot who had been engaged, followed us in the DeHaviland that had been rented for the picture. The rest of the company had preceded us by special train, and were awaiting us upon our arrival.

The opening scenes were made at a big ranch intended, in the story, to be on the Mexican border. Jean was supposed to be the daughter of the rancher—played by old Cliff Bowes—who was secretly the head of a great dope-smuggling ring. The deep-dyed villain was the ranch foreman, played by Ed Parker; and Reggie Carter was the hero who makes a forced landing in his plane near the ranch, and falls madly in love with Jean. Of course Carter learns that Jean's dad is the king-pin of the smuggling ring, and as Carter is supposed to be a government investigator posing as an air-minded ne'er-do-well, complications follow.

Before evening of that first day on location, Jean was queen of all she surveyed. Even old Harry Banning, the sound technician, raved about her voice and her southern accent, and the extra players went out of their way to make her desert sojourn pleasant.

It was really funny at first, but as days passed, it grew less so. Before a week had elapsed, Charlie and I were both seriously in love with Jean, and what had been at first a friendly rivalry developed into something more vital. To make matters worse, Jean seemed to favor me over Charlie—perhaps because I was a good horseman. She was a splendid rider herself, and we took many jaunts together. Besides, as I was assigned to double for her in several shots, I naturally came more in contact with her than Evans did—to his chagrin.

**T**HE fourth evening at the ranch location, I returned from an after dinner ride with Jean to find Charlie in a somber mood.

"The whole company is talking about you, Nick," he said. "You're paying too much attention to Jean. Better lay off a bit; you're just a stunter, and out of her class."

"Jealous?" I laughed.

His brows drew together, and I saw his features tense.

"I'm just giving you a tip," he snapped. "You don't want to queer yourself with Wyndham, do you? Don't forget that Jim discovered her, and has more than a professional interest in her—"

"Speak for yourself, John," I interposed lightly. "I may be little—but so was Napoleon!"

It was just a bit of banter on my part. For over twelve years Charlie and I had been almost like brothers, always ready to "kid" each other. But Charlie became angry, and before I realized it, we were engaged in a bitter argument. When we retired for the night, we were not on speaking terms. In the morning I made an attempt to patch things up, but Charlie wouldn't meet me half way. I realized that for the first time in our long association, a woman had come between us; that I really loved Jean Talbot, and that Charlie Evans did also.

That Jean could care for me was more than I dared to hope. She was embarking upon a screen career that might end in stardom and fame; I was just an aviator and a stuntman, whom fate had decreed to work with her.

That afternoon I doubled for her for the first time, dressed in a duplicate of her riding habit, with a blond wig concealing my manly locks. The stunt was simple enough to both Evans and me, for we had carried it out on other occasions: a pick-up from a moving object on the ground. However, we had never tried it with a horse before, and I was in for an exciting day.

THE horse I was riding shied whenever Charlie's plane, with its dangling rope ladder, swooped down to pick me up. The first time I was thrown, and a terrified bit of horseflesh lit out for parts unknown. It was an hour before the animal was roped and brought back. There was no hope of using another mount, as the scene had to match previous shots that had been taken, and this horse was conspicuous because of her individual pinto markings. We tried it again and again, but each time the pinto shied off the road at the approach of the Jenny. The sun set before a successful take could be made.

It was the first time I had failed to carry out a stunt, and I wasn't any too pleased when Wyndham announced that a substitute would have to tackle the job in the morning.

"You may know horses, Nick," he said, "but you can't handle that baby. I'll ask Pete Simmons to do the stunt; the pinto may behave for him."

Simmons was a little cowboy who held several rodeo records, and who had worked in pictures for some four years.

I didn't say anything; I knew that, until the pinto was "broken in" to the plane stunt, it would make little difference who rode her.

Simmons had no better luck, and on the fourth attempt he was thrown, and painfully injured. It looked as if the stunt were doomed, then, unless another horse was used and retakes made of previous scenes showing the pinto. Then Jean came forward calmly, and announced that she would do the stunt. I thought she was joking at first, but she was serious.

"Over my dead body!" Wyndham exclaimed. "Nothing doing, Jean!"

"But Patches trusts me more than anyone," she broke in, referring to the pinto. "Let me try it, at least! And as for climbing up to the plane, it wouldn't be the first time that I've climbed a rope ladder!"

"But not when said rope ladder is being whisked through the air at close to a hundred miles an hour," I cut in, exaggerating a bit, for the stunt was to be pulled at a stalling speed of around sixty; bad enough, however.

But that day Jean proved that she had spunk. She argued with all of us, even threatening to return to Los Angeles. The scene, she argued, had to be made, somehow; the pinto trusted her more than it did anyone else, myself included—which was true enough; the horse, like the rest of us, seemed to worship her.

Wyndham finally compromised. Evans was to approach again with the plane, but without drawing quite close enough for her to seize the ladder. The horse shied again, but somehow, Jean managed to keep her on the road. This was essential, as the camera truck would have to follow behind,

and the bumpy areas on either side of the road would result in equally bumpy pictures.

"I can do it!" Jean declared. "Didn't I keep Patches on the road? Let's try a shot, Jim!"

Wyndham praised her courage, but declined. Another argument followed, all of us, including Evans, who had landed, trying to convince her of the danger. Then we learned that Jean was not only spunky but possessed of a temper. She would either do the stunt, or drop out of the picture. And that was that.

Evans announced that he would be no party to her "suicide," stating that he, too, could quit the production with no hard feelings. Jean favored him with a scornful smile, and appealed to me.

"You take the ship up, Nick," she pleaded. "You know I can do it, don't you?"

From the glow in those blue eyes, I knew that she could. She was the finest horsewoman I had seen in years, and she had intelligence. A wind had come up, and she argued that, with the plane heading against the wind, its speed would be decreased.

"I'll tell you what," I addressed Wyndham. "I think Miss Talbot could do it all; the wind is favorable. But I suggest breaking the scene just after she makes the change to the ladder, and matching it with a double shot—with me. Follow up with a car so she can drop into it."

"What's the matter with that?" Jean turned upon the director triumphantly. "I can certainly hang on until the car gets under me."

I had let myself in for a lot of criticism; Evans was particularly virulent. But at last Jean had her way, and we made arrangements to film the scene according to my suggestion. When all was in readiness, I took off, circling about until I caught Wyndham's signal from the camera truck.

I felt shaky, then, until I saw Jean waving to me. Cautiously, I sloped the ship toward the galloping pony, taking as much advantage of the wind as I could by manipulating ailerons and stabilizers. Behind Jean came three gunmen, riding like maniacs, and behind them the camera truck.

I knew that it was the roaring of the motor that scared the horse, so watching my opportunity, I cut out the throttle and dove. Jean tried to control the frightened pinto—as the plane swooped down and the rope ladder dangled almost within reach. She missed it, however, and picking up the motor again, I banked around, regaining my former position. This time the same tactics proved successful; Jean managed to grasp the ladder and secure her arms and legs in the cords as we shot upward. There was a moment of anxiety, and then I saw her smiling features upturned to me, and saw her wave a hand bravely.

The next minute the pick-up car was under her. I kept directly above the middle of the road, until the car below was traveling at exactly the same speed, then I dropped slowly. It was with no little relief that I saw the men in the tonneau grasp Jean's ankles and knew, as she let go, that she was safe.

After that, of course, Jean was a real heroine.

"FRANKLY, though," she confessed to me, "I wouldn't do it again; it's not as easy as it looks."

This evidence of her courage served to make her all the more desirable in my eyes. Here was a comely, spirited young woman who not only measured up to my ideal of an outdoor girl, but who had amazing nerve. And as a stuntman, to whom nerve is a sort of god, the possession of this quality made Jean Talbot the one woman, in my estimation.

From that day on, our one-sided romance progressed. I say one-sided, for I dared not believe that she could care for me. Poor Charlie Evans, like myself, had become all the more infatuated since her daring feat. Yet he was to meet with a bitter disappointment.

It was while doubling for the star, Reggie Carter, that Charlie met his Waterloo in love. The scene opened with

Jean struggling to free herself from quicksands in the river sequence of the picture. The hero, Carter, was supposed to appear on his horse at the rim of a towering cliff overhead; discover her and, securing the end of a lariat about a tree, let himself down hand over hand to rescue her.

Evans carried off the scene without a hitch, but at the close, after dragging Jean to safety, he was supposed to take her in his arms. The scene was to have been cut there, while the cameras and microphones moved up for a semi-closeup, with Carter taking Evans' place. Charlie must have forgotten himself, though, for we saw him hug Jean close and kiss her several times—and saw her struggle out of his embrace and send him sprawling with a well placed slap.

I WAS too astonished to feel angry. Jean was furious, though she said nothing. Charlie made some sheepish apology, and explained to Wyndham that he

quavered slightly. "I haven't any more of a chance with her than—than—"

"—than I have; go on, say it!" Charlie said bitterly. Then he managed a smile, and came toward me, gripping my hand. "Oh, yes you have, Nick; I can't tell you how I know, old timer, but I do. It's in here." He tapped his head with a forefinger. "I tell you, I know."

Evans had always been somewhat psychic, by which I mean that he had an almost uncanny power of intuition. Time and time again, in the twelve years of our association he had amazed me by his hunches. One of them, indeed, had once saved our lives.

So, on this occasion, I was strongly impressed by his words. Moreover, I was in love, and wanted nothing so much as to believe him.

Nevertheless, I made light of the remark.

"You may be right, Charlie," I said, torn by the dejected slump of his massive shoulders. "But right or wrong, it mustn't make any difference in our friendship."

Our eyes met, and then our hands.

"You're damned right it mustn't!"

Evans grinned. "Pals to the end, Nick!"

And ten minutes later, he remarked, over a desultory game of cribbage: "I have a queer feeling that—"

He left the sentence unfinished, shrugged and extracted a cigarette.

"A queer feeling about what?" I prompted.

"Oh, nothing," he grunted. "Let's have a match; it was just a fool notion. Forget it!"

Fourteen hours later, I realized what that "notion" had been. We

were stunting for the cameras—Charlie and I in the Jenny, and Sam Foster and Ed Parker in the DeHaviland. I was piloting the Jenny, while Evans, doubling for Carter, was out on the top of the port wing, waiting for his chance to change to the other ship. And then it happened.

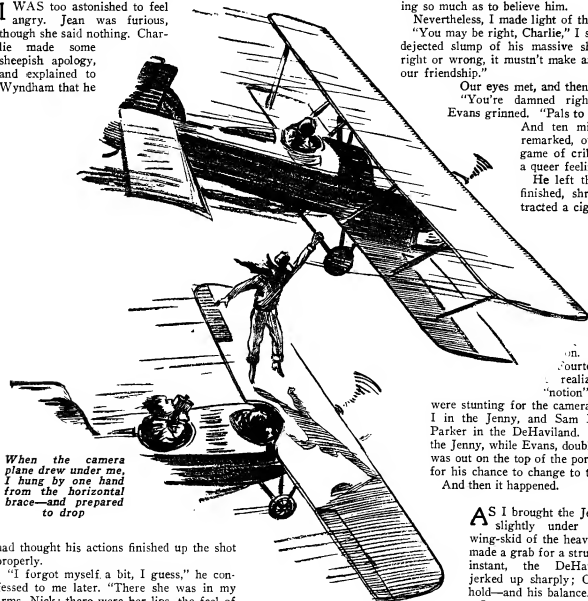
AS I brought the Jenny alongside, slightly under the starboard wing-skid of the heavier ship, Evans made a grab for a strut. At the same instant, the DeHaviland's wing jerked up sharply; Charlie lost his hold—and his balance.

I was not overly alarmed, for he had his parachute; I was angry at

Foster for his clumsiness, as Charlie dropped into the void and I caught a glimpse of the disappointed features of Wyndham in the camera plane behind us.

Circling around, I watched Evans turn over and over, hurtling toward the ground. At any moment, now, he'd pluck the ring, and the risers would jerk him upright as his parachute mushroomed open. But there was something wrong. Down, down he pitched, tearing at the cord, and at last the chute trailed out overhead. The next instant Evans plunged into a grove of trees, tearing the parachute to shreds.

Soul-sick, dazed with horror, yet hoping that he had managed to escape with his life, I plunged the Jenny toward the



When the camera plane drew under me, I hung by one hand from the horizontal brace—and prepared to drop

had thought his actions finished up the shot properly.

"I forgot myself a bit, I guess," he confessed to me later. "There she was in my arms, Nick; there were her lips, the feel of her soft arms about me. I—I just couldn't help it," he finished, missing the fire that must have been in my eyes. "Anyway, I'm a damned fool—but I know where I stand with her, now. I'm a big clown, in her estimation; she likes you."

"Me?" I found myself echoing, my resentment subsiding. "Yes, you," Charlie affirmed grimly, meeting my gaze. "Are you blind, Nick? Can't you see it in the way she looks at you—in the way she talks to you?"

I stared at him, incredulous.

"Anyway," he muttered, "we can't both have her. We've shared everything, Nick, so far, but—we can't share her—"

"Are you crazy, Charlie?" I demanded, though my voice

field. Men were running toward the woods; the DeHaviland and the other ship followed me down. I cut the ignition as my points touched, and was running for the woods before the ship had come to a stop.

I have no explanation to offer for what happened next—I shall never forget it as long as I live.

As I entered the grove, a voice—the voice of Evans—sounded in my ears:

"Too bad, Nick! I guess this splits up the old team."

Yet Charlie Evans lay dead or wounded at least a hundred yards further on!

Those words seared into my brain. It was as if he had crept out of the trees, unseen, and spoken right in my ears.

I paused, staring around. And then Kingman, the property man, came running out of the woods.

"Got to get a doctor, quick," he said. "Charlie's in a bad way," and he rushed on.

Stunned, I ran on. That voice—it had been Charlie's, yet . . . I ran on. At last I heard voices and soon saw a small group of grim-faced men in the trees ahead. I caught a glimpse of the tattered parachute, caught on a sturdy limb high above the ground; of broken shroud lines.

"Charlie!" I blurted out, elbowing my way through the group.

HE was lying there on the grass, limp and bruised, his features ashen. His eyes opened slowly as I took his hand, and a wan smile twisted his lips.

"Hello, Nick—Be all right, old-man," he whispered. "Don't worry—get—doctor—"

That was all. He closed his eyes. He never opened them again, for a second later a shudder racked his poor, broken body, and he passed on. Words cannot describe my grief; can never tell what his passing meant to me.

It was a week before the Carter company resumed production, without the team of Evans and Sanford.

Jean took Charlie's death almost as hard as I did, and at length, encouraged by her sympathy, I impulsively told her of hearing Charlie's voice when entering the woods. She studied me gravely, asking me what I had heard or imagined hearing. When I had repeated it, she looked away, her features troubled.

"Strange," she murmured at length. "Of course you were a long way from the spot where he lay, and—they say that he didn't speak a single word until you arrived."

I noticed that she did not question my impression, and said as much.

"Why should I?" she replied soberly. "I believe that you heard him. There are forces that science has never acknowledged, much less classified, and among them is thought-transference. Charlie probably thought the words you heard. Your subconscious mind picked up the thought, and it was so poignant as to seem spoken."

Jean shrugged as I stared at her.

"At least," she said, "that is my interpretation. There must have been a strong bond between you."

"There was," I affirmed vehemently.

She took my hand, regarding me through misty eyes, her lips tremulous.

"There—is," she corrected softly. "He still lives, you know, on another plane; in another—world."

I had never given much thought to such views. But coming from Jean, they seemed to take on a certain authority; perhaps because I loved her.

"You—believe that?" I said at length.

"I do. Mother has communicated with me during the six years since she passed away. Not by speech, exactly—by thought." She looked away. "You may think me queer," she added. "I know you don't believe in supernatural things."

"You know?"

"Perhaps I should have said *feel*," she corrected, smiling at me. "You are—too vital, shall I say? You are used to contending with the things you see, feel, hear, taste—smell.

Most of us are. But to some of us is given a sixth sense—a sort of psychic sense."

I felt out of my element. Could Jean be right?

"This 'thought-transference' you speak of," I remarked. "You seem satisfied that there is such a thing. But how does it work?"

"Who can say? Perhaps the mind sends out vibrations, something like the sound waves produced by radio stations. Another mind, attuned for the moment to—the wave length, we will call it—receives the thought. Again and again I have had reason to believe that such a phenomenon exists. Last night, for example, I received an impression—a sort of picture, of you. I was wide awake at the time, and it was about midnight—"

"What was it?" I interrupted rudely.

"I seemed to see you walking in the moonlight through some fields, your head down—"

I gave an involuntary gasp. For the previous night, unable to sleep, I had taken a long walk through the fields bordering the ranch!

"So it is true; you *were* walking!" she said softly.

"Yes! But how—how did you know?"

"I can't tell you. It was simply another case of thought-transference, of a slightly different nature. Listen—"

She leaned closer, her features earnest, her blue eyes flashing.

"Once—about three years ago—I had the strong feeling that my father was in New York. I was in a revue there, then, and I had just returned to my apartment from a rehearsal. I was sure that Dad was in Texas. Well, sir, a few minutes later he walked in on me—surprised me."

Dim recollections stirred within me. "I can remember occurrences like that," I said, "now that I think of it."

"Of course you can; all of us have such experiences, but most of us make some allowances for them, and forget them."

For several minutes we discussed the subject, until Wyndham called her to the set.

That night, or I should say early the next morning, for it must have been around three o'clock, I had a dream. I say a dream, but on looking back, I am not so sure.

Charlie Evans had entered the cabin, and was standing over me, smiling. I opened my eyes. Moonlight streamed through the windows, lighting the cabin. I was alone; all was still, save for the ticking of the alarm clock on a table, and soft night-sounds outside. Yet it seemed as though Evans was there; I could almost feel his presence. The feeling was very strong, and for some moments I lay there, knowing that I was wide awake, trying to analyze my impression.

IT was a queer sensation. I put it down to nerves, but it persisted. And then, suddenly, something small and white—an envelope—fluttered from the table, striking the edge of my cot and dropping to the floor. Even this did not disturb me, for I naturally reasoned that a slight draft had dislodged the envelope. I reached down and picked it up. It read:

Mr. Charles S. Evans,  
c/o Associated Productions,  
El Camino Rancho,  
Barstow, Calif.

It was simply an old envelope, empty. I knew that the letter itself had not been important. But, despite my conviction that a draft had swept it from the table, the feeling grew upon me that it was a sign from Charlie—and I fancied that I could still feel his presence.

I was so disturbed that I got up and slipped on my lounging-robe, and lit a cigarette. I thought of my talk with Jean. Was it possible that my pal was visiting me in spirit? How long I sat there I am not sure; perhaps three or four minutes. And then I thought I saw something moving—a tenuous something that seemed strangely human. But when I

strained my eyes to make certain, I could see nothing. A moment later, the door, which I had left partly open to admit air, swung slowly, eerily upon its hinges, and closed with a bang! Simultaneously the feeling that Evans was present departed.

Now all of this can well be explained by one word: draft—as far as the physical manifestations of the envelope and the door are concerned. As to my feeling that Charlie was in the cabin, that may have been purely imagination—perhaps . . .

Shortly after breakfast that morning, while I was greasing the rocker-arms of the Jenny's motor, Jean came up to the plane.

"Charlie was here last night," she said, very softly.

I nearly dropped the grease can.

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"I saw him, or his spirit," she replied gravely, her blue eyes holding mine. "I—I thought I was dreaming, at first, Nick; but I know that I wasn't. My bed is at the window that looks out upon your cabin, you know. I don't know what awakened me; I had a strange feeling—about you. What it was, I don't know. Anyway, I raised the shade, and looked toward the cabin. I had a sudden feeling that—well, that things were the same; that you and Charlie were still together in that cabin."

She laughed oddly, her eyes roving over my features.

"Why, Nick! you're pale—you saw him, too!"

"Go on," I said hoarsely. "You say you saw him?"

"WELL, after a few minutes, I saw the door of your cabin close; heard it slam shut, in fact. Then I saw someone leave the place and head directly for my window. I knew it wasn't you; it was a big, powerful man—a man of Charlie's build. He came close, halting in the shadows of those trees near the ranch-house—and then I knew it was Charlie—or his ghost. Somehow, I wasn't afraid. He—sort of kissed his fingers to me, laughed, and then walked on, disappearing around the end of the ranch-house. As he passed through a patch of moonlight, he seemed to float, more than walk—to grow transparent."

Jean flushed, lowering her eyes.

"I don't know why I've told you this," she murmured.

"You—you can't believe it; I just know you can't."

"I was unable to reply for a moment."

"Jean," I said at length, no little disturbed, "about what time did this happen?"

"Early this morning—about three," she replied without hesitation. "I heard the grandfather clock in the parlor strike the hour a few minutes later. But—you knew that he was here?"

Somewhat hesitantly, I related my impressions. Jean was silent for a while, and then:

"And now, do you believe that there is another life, Nick?"

"It seems that I must believe," I replied.

"How did you feel? You weren't afraid?"

I shook my head emphatically.

"It's strange, though," Jean murmured. "You see, there's every reason why Charlie should be interested in you, but I can't understand why he should appear to me."

I met her eyes. Could it be possible that she didn't know?

"He loved you," I said impulsively. "That was why he—forgot himself in that scene."

"Oh!" Even under her make-up, her cheeks seemed to take on a deep color. I was about to add boldly that we had both loved her—when Wyndham and Reginald Carter joined us.

There were three stunts on the program that day: one on the river location, and the other two in the air. I had sent for an old friend, Gus Tanner, who at that time was an instructor at Clover Field, to pilot the Jenny.

Tanner was one of the finest pilots on the coast, and the logical choice to replace Evans. He also was a big man, of the same general build as the star, Reggie Carter, and was to double for the hero in the few remaining stunt scenes.

As Wyndham wanted morning light for the river shots,

we did those first. Noon found us back at the rancho, and after lunch, preparations were made for filming the two remaining air stunts that I had to do in the picture, doubling for Jean. Both were risky, because I was hampered by the wig, and the lack of helmet and goggles, and could wear no parachute. The first stunt was to discover me on the rope ladder of the Jenny, climbing up to the plane—the sequel to the shot taken several days before, in which Jean had transferred from the pinto to the ladder. The second stunt was more difficult—a transfer from the Jenny to the camera plane, supposed to be a border scout, and then back again to the Jenny.

It was while planning these shots that Jean betrayed her regard for me. She begged Wyndham to retake the previous scenes made after reaching the plane, and to let her wear a parachute, thereby making it possible for me to wear one in doubling for her in the transfer shot. When the director gave good reasons why this couldn't be done, she argued that trick photography and double printing might be resorted to.

"We can't fake that shot, Jean," Wyndham protested. "That double transfer is the high spot of the picture; everything in the plot hinges on getting that message to Patrol Headquarters—and in the manner called for in the 'script.'"

"There's nothing to worry about, Jean," I said confidently, thrilled by the look she gave me, and by her concern. "We can do it, can't we, boys?"

Both Gus Tanner and Harry Lucas, who was piloting the camera plane, expressed the utmost confidence in my ability to do the double transfer without a hitch.

Jean made no further comment. But she found an opportunity to take me aside a few minutes before we took off for the ladder shot.

"Promise me that you'll be extra careful, Nick," she pleaded.

The way she looked at me gave me courage to make my first attempt to find out just where I stood in her affection.

"Would you care if something happened?" I asked, taking her hands.

"Of course," she murmured, somewhat reproachfully.

"Very much?" I persisted.

Her eyes held mine, and her lips quivered.

"Yes—Nick."

It was enough; I was ready to make a triple change—and tack on any other stunt into the bargain!

AS I climbed into the Jenny, I remembered Charlie's assurances that Jean cared for me—assurances that I had not dared to believe at the time. How had he known? Suddenly I had the odd impression of hearing his old familiar chuckle; of feeling his presence in the front cockpit, now occupied by Gus. Perhaps it was imagination; yet, from what followed, I don't think so. Charlie was with me during the flights that afternoon. I am as sure of that as I am of the fact that I am alive—and that I might have been dead!

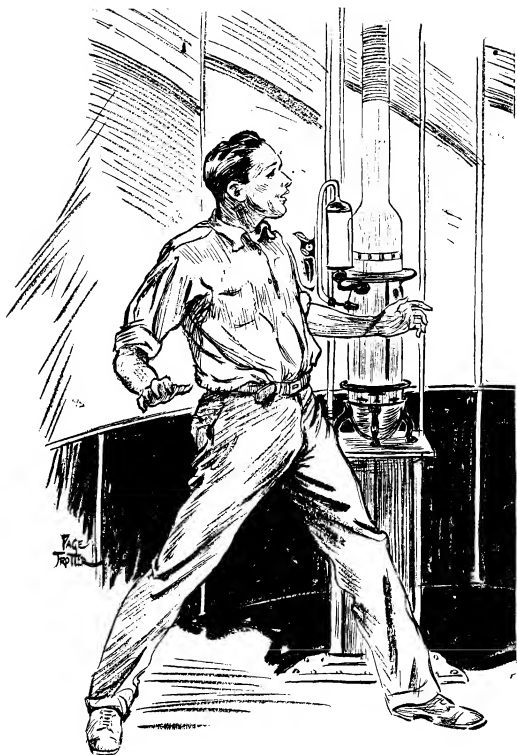
The ladder stunt was nothing. Gus simply flew along above the three riders who, in the story, were to have nearly captured Jean, while I, as Jean, after having climbed down the ladder, climbed up again, with the cameras registering the scene from the camera plane.

Following this, we landed, to make final preparations for the double transfer. Particular attention was paid to my make-up, for in boarding the camera plane I would be close to the lenses. When at last the hateful wig was firmly secured, and I had been made to look as feminine as possible, Gus enlivened the occasion by pretending to flirt with me, much to the amusement of everyone—except Jean.

"Remember, Nick," she breathed, in a moment when we were alone, "you must be extra careful. Do you feel all right?"

I had never felt better in my life, I assured her. Gus called for contact, I jerked the prop, and soon we were climbing into the blue vault, the camera plane taking off after us. At six thousand feet we caught (Continued on page 92)

*She was young and starved for love—but he was loyal to her husband, the old lighthouse keeper. Did the sea unite the lovers—for one mad moment—in spite of death, in spite of ruin and dishonor?*



*"And where's HE?" I gasped.  
"Where's the boat?"*

## The Woman at

**I** TELL you, sir, I was innocent. I didn't know any more about the world at twenty-two than some do at twelve. My uncle and aunt in Duxbury brought me up strict; I studied hard in high school, I worked hard after hours and I went to church twice on Sundays, and I can't see it's right to put me in a place like this, with crazy people. Oh, yes, I know they're crazy—you can't tell me. As for what they said in court about finding her with her husband, that's the Inspector's lie, sir, because he's down on me, and wants to make it look like my fault.

No, sir, I can't say as I thought she was handsome—not

at first. For one thing, her lips were too thin and white, and her color was bad. I'll tell you a fact, sir; that first day I came off to the Light I was sitting on my cot in the store-room (that's where the assistant keeper sleeps at the Seven Brothers), as lonesome as I could be, away from home for the first time, and the water all around me, and even though it was a calm day, pounding enough on the ledge to send a kind of *woom-woom-woom* whining up through all that solid rock of the tower. And when old Feddersen poked his head down from the living room with the sunshine above making a kind of bright frame around his hair and whiskers, to give



By

WILBUR DANIEL  
STEELE

Winner of the  
1926 O. Henry Memorial Award  
for the Best American Short Story

"He's drowned,"  
she said, as easy  
as that. "And I've  
come back for you  
—beloved. . . ."

# Seven Brothers

me a cheery, "Make yourself to home, son!" I remember I said to myself: "He's all right. I'll get along with him. But his wife's enough to sour milk." That was queer, because she was so much under him in age—long about twenty-eight or so, and him nearer fifty. But that's what I said, sir.

OF course that feeling wore off, same as any feeling will wear off sooner or later in a place like the Seven Brothers. Cooped up in a place like that, you come to know folks so well that you forget what they *do* look like. There was a long time I never noticed her, any more than you'd

notice the cat. We used to sit of an evening around the table, as if you were Fedderson there, and me here, and her somewhere back there, in the rocker, knitting. Fedderson would be working on his Jacob's-ladder, and I'd be reading. He'd been working on that Jacob's-ladder a year, I guess, and every time the Inspector came off with the tender he was so astonished to see how good that ladder was that the old man would go to work and make it better. That's all he lived for.

If I was reading, as I say, I daren't take my eyes off the book, or Fedderson had me. And then he'd begin—what the

Inspector said about him. How surprised the member of the board had been, that time, to see everything so clean about the light. What the Inspector had said about Fedderson's being stuck here in a second-class light—and him the best keeper on the coast. And so on and so on, till either he or I had to go aloft and have a look at the wicks.

He'd been there twenty-three years, all told, and he'd got used to the feeling that he was kept down unfair—so used to it, I guess, that he fed on it, and told himself how folks ashore would talk when he was dead and gone—best keeper on the coast—kept down unfair. Not that he said that to me. No, he was far too loyal and humble and respectful, doing his duty without complaint, as anybody could see.

And all that time, night after night, hardly ever a word out of the woman. As I remember it, she seemed more like a piece of furniture than anything else—not even a very good cook, nor over and above tidy. One day, when he and I were trimming the lamp, he passed the remark that his first wife used to dust the lens and take a pride in it. Not that he said a word against Anna, though. He never said a word against any living mortal; he was too upright.

I DON'T know how it came about; or rather, I *do* know, but it was so sudden, and so far away from my thoughts, that it shocked me, like the world turned over. It was at prayers. That night I remember Fedderson was uncommon long-winded. We'd had a batch of newspapers out by the tender, and at such times the old man always made a long watch out of it, getting the world straightened out. For one thing, the United States minister to Turkey was dead. Well, from him and his soul, Fedderson got on to Turkey and the Presbyterian college there, and from that to heathens in general. He rambled on and on, like the surf on the ledge, *woom-woom-woom*, never coming to an end.

You know how you'll be at prayers sometimes. My mind strayed. I counted the canes in the chair-seat where I was kneeling; I plaited a corner of the table-cloth between my fingers for a spell, and by and by my eyes went wandering up the back of the chair.

The woman, sir, was looking at me. Her chair was back to mine, close, and both our heads were down in the shadow under the edge of the table, with Fedderson clear over on the other side by the stove. And there were her two eyes hunting mine between the spindles in the shadow. You won't believe me, sir, but I tell you I felt like jumping to my feet and running out of the room—it was so queer.

I don't know what her husband was praying about after that. His voice didn't mean anything, no more than the seas on the ledge away down there. I went to work to count the canes in the seat again, but all my eyes were in the top of my head. It got so I couldn't stand it. We were at the Lord's Prayer, saying it singsong together, when I had to look up again. And there her two eyes were, between the spindles, hunting mine. Just then all of us were saying, "Forgive us our trespasses—" I thought of it afterward.

When we got up she was turned the other way, but I couldn't help seeing her cheeks were red. It was terrible. I wondered if Fedderson would notice, though I might have known he wouldn't—not him. He was in too much of a hurry to get at his Jacob's-ladder, and then he had to tell me for the tenth time what the Inspector said that day about getting him another light—Kingdom Come, maybe, he said.

I made some excuse or other and got away. Once in the storeroom, I sat down on my cot and stayed there a long time, feeling queerer than anything. I read a chapter in the Bible, I don't know why. After I'd got my boots off, I sat with them in my hands for as much as an hour, I guess, staring at the oil-tank and its lopsided shadow on the wall. I tell you, sir, I was shocked. I was only twenty-two, remember, and I was shocked and horrified.

And when I did turn in, finally, I didn't sleep at all well. Two or three times I came to, sitting straight up in bed. Once I got up and opened the outer door to have a look.

The water was like glass, dim, without a breath of wind, and the moon just going down. Over on the black shore I made out two lights in a village, like a pair of eyes watching. Lonely? My, yes! Lonely and nervous. I had a horror of her, sir. The dinghy-boat hung on its davits just there in front of the door, and for a minute I had an awful hankering to climb into it, lower away, and row off, no matter where. It sounds foolish.

Well, it seemed foolish next morning, with the sun shining and everything as usual—Fedderson sucking his pen and wagging his head over his eternal "log," and his wife down in the rocker with her head in the newspaper, and her breakfast work still waiting. I guess that jarred it out of me more than anything else—sight of her slouched down there, with her stringy, yellow hair and her dusty apron and the pale back of her neck, reading the Society Notes. *Society Notes!* Think of it! For the first time since I came to Seven Brothers I wanted to laugh.

I guess I did laugh when I went aloft to clean the lamp and found everything so free and breezy, gulls flying high and little whitecaps making under a westerly wind. It was like feeling a big load dropped off your shoulders. Fedderson came up with his dust-rag and cocked his head at me.

"What's the matter, Ray?" said he.

"Nothing," said I. And then I couldn't help it. "Seems kind of out of place for Society Notes," said I, "out here at Seven Brothers."

He was the other side of the lens, and when he looked at me he had a thousand eyes, all sober. For a minute I thought he was going on dusting, but then he came out and sat down on a sill.

"Sometimes," said he, "I get to thinking it may be a mite dull for her out here. She's pretty young, Ray. Not much more'n a girl, hardly."

"Not much more'n a girl!" It gave me a turn, sir, as though I'd seen my aunt in short dresses.

"It's a good home for her, though," he went on slow. "I've seen a lot worse ashore, Ray. Of course if I could get a shore light—"

"Kingdom Come's a shore light."

He looked at me out of his deep-set eyes, and then he turned them around the light-room, where he'd been so long.

"No," said he, wagging his head. "It ain't for such as me."

I never saw so humble a man.

"BUT look here," he went on, more cheerful. "As I was telling her just now, a month from yesterday's our fourth anniversary, and I'm going to take her ashore for the day and give her a holiday—new hat and everything. A girl wants a mite of excitement now and then, Ray."

There it was again, that "girl." It gave me the fidgets, sir. I had to do something about it. It's close quarters for last names in a Light, and I'd taken to calling him Uncle Matt soon after I came. Now, when I was at table that noon, I spoke over to where she was standing by the stove, getting him another help of chowder.

"I guess I'll have some, too, Aunt Anna," said I, matter-of-fact.

She never said a word nor gave a sign—just stood there kind of round-shouldered, dipping the chowder. And that night at prayers I hitched my chair around the table, with its back the other way.

You get awful lazy in a lighthouse, some ways. No matter how much tinkering you've got, there's still a lot of time and there's such a thing as too much reading. The changes in weather get monotonous, too, by and by; the light burns the same on a thick night as it does on a fair one. Of course, there's the ships, north-bound, south-bound—wind-jammers, freighters, passenger boats full of people. In the watches at night you can see their lights



go by, and wonder what they are, how they're laden, where they'll fetch up, and all. . . .

I used to do that almost every evening when it was my first watch, sitting out on the walk-around up there with my legs hanging over the edge and my chin propped on the railing—lazy. The Boston boat was the prettiest to see, with her three tiers of portholes lit, like a string of pearls wrapped round and round a woman's neck—well away, too, for the ledge must have made a couple of hundred fathoms off the Light, like a white dog-tooth of a breaker, even on the darkest night.

Well, I was lolling there one night, as I say, watching the Boston boat go by, not thinking of anything special, when I heard the door on the other side of the tower open and footsteps coming around to me.

By and by I nodded toward the boat and passed the remark that she was fetching in uncommon close tonight. No answer. I made nothing of that, for oftentimes, Fedderson wouldn't answer, and after I'd watched the lights crawling on through the dark a spell, just to make conversation I said I guessed there'd be a bit of weather before long.

"I've noticed," said I, "when there's weather coming on, and the wind in the northeast, you can hear the orchestra playing aboard of her just over there. I make it out now. Do you?"

"Yes. Oh—yes—! I hear it all right!"

You can imagine I started. It wasn't him, but *her*. And there was something in the way she said that speech, sir—something—well—unnatural. Like a hungry animal snapping at a person's hand.

I turned and looked at her sidewise. She was standing by the railing, leaning a little outward, the top of her from the waist picked out bright by the lens behind her. I didn't know what in the world to say, and yet I had a feeling I ought not to sit there mum.

"I wonder," said I, "what that captain's thinking of, fetching in so handy tonight. It's no way. I tell you, if 'twasn't for this light, she'd go to work and pile up on the ledge some thick night—"

SHE turned at that and stared straight into the lens. I didn't like the look of her face. Somehow, with its edges cut hard all around and its two eyes closed down to the slits, like a cat's, it made a kind of mask.

"And then," I went on, uneasy enough—"and then where'd all their music be of a sudden, and their goings-on and their singing—"

"And dancing!" She clipped me off so quick it took my breath.

"D-d-dancing?" said I.

"That's dance-music," said she. She was looking at the boat again.

"How do you know?" I felt I had to keep on talking.

Well, sir—she laughed. I looked at her. She had a shawl of some stuff or other that shined in the light; she had it pulled tight around her with her two hands in front at her breast, and I saw her shoulders swaying in time.

"How do I know?" she cried. Then she laughed again, the same kind of a laugh. It was queer, sir, to see her and to hear her. She turned, as quick as that, and leaned toward me. "Don't you know how to dance, Ray?" said she.

"N—no," I managed, and I was going to say "Aunt Anna," but the thing choked in my throat.

I tell you she was looking square at me all the time with

her two eyes and moving with the music as if she didn't know it. By heavens, sir, it came over me of a sudden that she wasn't so bad-looking, after all. I guess I must have sounded like a fool.

"You—you see," said I, "she's cleared the rip there now, and the music's gone. You—you hear?"

"Yes," said she, turning back slow. "There's where it stops every night—night after night—it stops just there—at the rip."

When she spoke again her voice was different. I never heard the like of it, thin and taut as a thread. It made me shiver, sir.

"I hate 'em!" That's what she said. "I hate 'em all. I'd like to see 'em dead. I'd love to see 'em torn apart on the rocks, night after night. I could bathe my hands in their blood, night after night."

AND so you know, sir, I saw it with my own eyes, her hands moving in each other above the rail. But it was her voice, though. I didn't know what to do, what to say, so I poked my head through the railing and looked down at the water. I don't think I'm a coward, sir, but it was like a cold—ice-cold—hand, taking hold of my beating heart.

When I looked up finally, she was gone. By and by, I went in and had a look at the lamp, hardly knowing what I was about. Then, seeing by my watch it was time for the old man to come on duty, I started to go below. In the Seven Brothers, you understand, the stair goes down in a spiral through a well against the south wall, and first there's a door to the keeper's room and then you come to another, and that's the living room, and then down to the storeroom. And at night, if you don't carry a lantern, it's as black as the pit.

Well, down I went, sliding my hand along the rail, and as usual I stopped to give a rap on the keeper's door, in case he was taking a nap after supper. Sometimes he did.

I stood there, blind as a bat, with my mind still up on the walk-around. There was no answer to my knock. I hadn't expected any. Just from habit, and with my right foot already hanging down for the next step, I reached out to give the door one more tap for luck.

Do you know, sir, my hand didn't fetch up on anything. The door had been there a second before, and now the door wasn't there. My hand just went on going through the dark, on and on, and I didn't seem to have sense or power 'enough to stop it. There didn't seem any air in the wall to breathe, and my ears were drumming to the surf—that's how scared I was. And then my hand touched the flesh of a face, and something in the dark said "Oh!" no louder than a sigh.

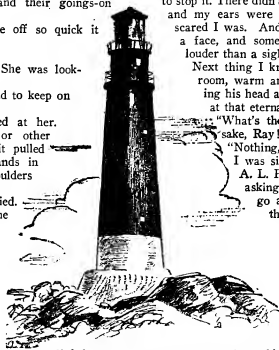
Next thing I knew, sir, I was down in the living-room, warm and yellow-lit, with Fedderson cocking his head at me across the table, where he was at that eternal Jacob's-ladder of his.

"What's the matter, Ray?" said he. "Lord's sake, Ray!"

"Nothing," said I. Then I think I told him I was sick. That night I wrote a letter to A. L. Peters, the grain-dealer in Duxbury, asking for a job—even though it wouldn't go ashore for a couple of weeks, just the writing of it made me feel better.

It's hard to tell you how those two weeks went by. I don't know why, but I felt like hiding in a corner all the time. I had to come to meals, but I didn't look at her, though, not once, unless it was by accident. Fedderson thought I was still ailing and nagged me to death with advice and so on. One thing I

(Continued on page 86)



The lonely lighthouse at Seven Brothers, where this weird drama of love and the supernatural was enacted

# KIDNAPPED

*Even if the old inn at St. Hypolite was haunted, how could an invisible creature steal a living woman?*

By

GILBERT DRAPER

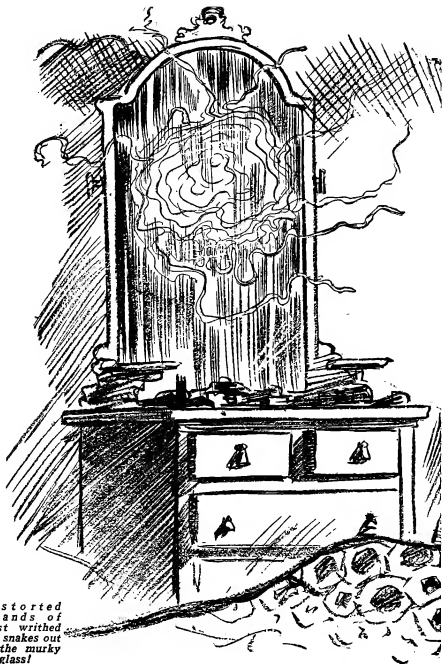
**I**N the late summer of 1928 I travelled to an obscure French-Canadian village in the heart of the Laurentian Mountains, to spend my vacation at an ideally restful place I had discovered the year before. The village to which I went was called St. Hypolite. It was far from the beaten track of vacationists, so to speak, and most of the time I was the only guest at the one house where strangers were accommodated.

This hostelry, kept by a stolid Frenchwoman named Beauchamps, was one of the oldest, if not the oldest, residence in the place. It was shaped exactly like a large box, square and unadorned, save for a solitary stone chimney. The walls were white-washed inside and out, and were of amazing thickness due, I learned, to the hostility of the Indians at the time the house was constructed. Madame Beauchamps kept it scrupulously clean, but it could never be described as "cheerful." There was something positively sinister about its plain ugliness. Indeed, the year before, I had left it feeling strangely depressed, as though its atmosphere had been haunted.

During the winter, however, the remembrance of Madame's cooking and the peaceful time I had enjoyed made me decide to visit the old place again.

On the night of which I write, I reached the house just as the shadows of evening were enveloping the picturesque summits of the Laurentians. The wooded slopes of these great rounded hills rose on all sides, shutting St. Hypolite, as it were, away from the rest of the world. I was too fatigued after my long and bumpy drive from the station

*Distorted strands of mist writhed like snakes out of the murky glass!*



to converse with Madame, and ascended immediately to my room on the top floor. I did not even think to inquire whether I was, as usual, the inn's only guest.

Several hours later my deep sleep was rudely disturbed by a woman's scream. I sat up in bed quivering with excitement, mingled, I confess, with fear. As I waited breathlessly for a repetition of the cry, a clock in the depths of the house struck two.

**T**HEN I heard a click, and the next instant saw the door of my room opening inward! I held my breath. The door, pushed by an unseen hand, moved with maddening slowness. A faint ray of light from the oil lamp in the hall fell across the bare floor. I stared at this spot, expecting the shadow of my nocturnal visitor to afford me some clue to his identity. Judge, then, my amazement, when the door, after opening wide enough to admit an ordinary human being and to let me see into the deserted hall, began

# by a WRAITH



*"Cover the mirror — if you value your sanity!" a mysterious voice whispered in my ear*

leave the room when the sound of someone running up the stairs made me halt. The footsteps did not slacken until they reached my door, which was flung open unceremoniously.

A girl, clothed only in a diaphanous nightgown, stood on the threshold, her large, wide-open eyes and tumultuous breathing expressing the terror that was doubtless responsible for her sudden appearance.

We stared at each other until suddenly, without so much as a gasp, she collapsed and lay still. Her deathlike pallor frightened me and I picked her up as gently as I could and carried her to the bed.

Then, after covering her with a quilt, I darted to the washstand to wet the end of a towel with which to bathe her forehead. But before I could do so she had opened her eyes.

At first the strangeness of the room seemed to bewilder her. She looked about, unable to place the unfamiliar surroundings, while I stood watching her, the towel in my hand. My position in the shadows prevented her from becoming immediately aware of my presence, and I remained motionless, greatly impressed with her extraordinary beauty.

IN a minute or two she had raised herself on one elbow and was pushing the hair back from her eyes in a dazed manner, evidently still oblivious of her flight up the stairs.

Then she saw me, and at the recollection of her terrifying experience, she uttered a despairing moan. I dropped the towel and stepped forward, but she stopped me with a gesture.

"The door, the door!" she gasped. "Lock it!"

I hastened to comply with her terrified request, and then

to close, though neither shadow nor form had appeared!

My first inclination was to shout, but terror prevented me from opening my lips. I waited with a sickening premonition of impending tragedy. Not a sound was to be heard.

I think that had I known there were people within earshot, my horror would have been less acute; but as it was, the uncameness of the occurrence overwhelmed me with unreasoning terror.

How can I describe the thrill I felt when I heard another click? Once more I witnessed the strange phenomenon, but when the door had closed this time I knew beyond all doubt that my unseen visitor had departed.

It was not long before I had sufficiently recovered from the shock to light the candle on the table by my bed. The tiny flame sent weird shadows dancing over the walls and ceiling, but it served as a stimulant to my shaken nerves. Throwing back the covers, I slipped off the huge feather mattress and got into my dressing gown. I was about to

seated myself beside her on the bed. The extreme impropriety of the situation did not occur to me in my addled state, and forcing myself to speak calmly, I asked her to tell me what had happened.

"I know I shouldn't be here like this," she began, but I had no other place to go. You passed my door on your way upstairs tonight, so I knew your room must be on this floor. We are the only boarders, and Madame, as you know, sleeps downstairs."

"But what happened?" I inquired again.

She shuddered and gripped my arm.

"As usual I read in bed until nearly twelve," she continued. "The book was stupid, but I did not put it down because the noise of the crickets and frogs was so loud that nobody could possibly sleep. The very atmosphere seemed to be throbbing."

"Soon I was startled by a persistent bat that kept beating against the mosquito netting across my window. At first I didn't pay much attention to it, but when for the ninth or tenth time I heard its claws tearing at the cloth, I became horribly afraid it would get in. Knowing it was attracted by the light, I blew my candle out. Then I buried my head in the pillow and tried to go to sleep."

"Just as I was dozing off I heard Madame fixing the chain on the front door. I must have fallen asleep soon after that, for I don't remember anything else until I woke up with a start—for no apparent reason. The room was pitch black and I was sure there had been no sound. Certainly it was deathly still at the moment, and through the open window I could see myriads of stars."

"I SAT up, wondering what had aroused me. Hearing and seeing nothing, I was going to lie down again when the uncanny feeling of being watched petrified me. Almost simultaneously I knew that something was lurking near the bed. I was too frightened to scream. The blood seemed to have frozen in my veins. Can you believe me when I say that despite this awful sensation I had not heard the *lightest* sound, nor seen so much as a *shadow* move?"

She paused, while I, deeply interested, waited eagerly for the conclusion of her weird story. Her hand still clutched my arm, unconsciously, it seemed.

"When I felt I simply couldn't stand any more," she went on, speaking slowly and deliberately, "something moved just beyond the foot of the bed. It made the strangest sound I ever heard. I was sure it had not been caused by anything mortal. It was like some heavy mass of soft material rolling over—a peculiar hissing. . . ."

"I sat frozen with horror until the door leading into the hall opened and closed. Heavens, how thankful I was! The 'Thing' had gone! For perhaps a full minute I didn't stir. Then I screamed—I couldn't help it. But afterward I was too terrified to stay in that room any longer. I remembered you were upstairs, and although the fear of being molested in the corridor nearly robbed me of the power to move, I knew I would go insane if I remained alone another minute. How I got to the foot of the stairs, I don't know; but when I did I flung caution aside and rushed up here."

Having told me of her almost unbelievable adventure, the girl sank back on the pillow with closed eyes. I hesitated to tell her of my own experience with the invisible terror because I feared to shatter the sense of security that was helping her to regain her composure. Were she to learn that the Thing responsible for her torment had been in this very room before she entered it, her mind might give away completely. I determined, therefore, to say nothing about the matter.

She was breathing regularly now. One bare arm was extended toward me above the quilt, the white skin gleaming in the light of the flickering candle; the other she had drawn beneath the coverlet.

I got up quietly to get my pipe. After filling and lighting it, I drew forward a chair, intending to remain on guard the rest of the night. I must have disturbed her, for she opened her eyes.

"You're not going?" she whispered timidly.

I promised to remain where I was. "You'd better try to sleep," I told her. "I don't think we will have more trouble, but I'll wake you if anything happens."

She smiled gratefully and closed her eyes.

Then began a vigil of nearly an hour's duration. From where I sat I could see through the window. Eastward the stars were pale, but northward one large silver orb shone low down on the horizon. The owls were haunting the woods with their banshee notes. The world was bathed in a silvery radiance. How, I wondered, could anything unholy be abroad at such a time?

I became drowsy in spite of myself. Everything seemed so peaceful and still. It became increasingly difficult to keep awake. All my former terror had vanished. Indeed, I began to wonder if my imagination had not played a trick on me. My companion's weird tale I felt inclined to dismiss as the result of hysteria. After all, neither of us had actually seen anything, and for myself I was ready to admit the impossibility of my own imagined encounter with the supernatural. Why, then, I reasoned, should I force myself to remain awake when my over-taxed nerves were demanding rest? The girl was slumbering as if she hadn't a care in the world.

Then, more to satisfy my curiosity and keep awake than because I hoped to discover a solution of the mystery, I decided to make a minute search of the room.

In one corner was a small closet, formed in a sort of pepperbox turret. On my previous visit I had noticed that inside, the floor boards looked loose and uneven. But now I took the candle and soon discovered that they were not nailed. Getting down on my hands and knees, I found that some of them lifted up quite easily, and was amazed to uncover a black, sinister hole. At first a host of ghostly explanations for it assailed me but on second thought I decided it was probably only an unused chimney. A musty, dank odor reached my nostrils as I replaced the boards, and I told myself that in the morning I would question Madame concerning this black shaft.

THERE being nothing else to investigate, I returned to my chair by the bed and was soon dozing comfortably.

I could not have slumbered very long, for when I awoke the stars were just beginning to pale. The candle, though reduced to a stub, was still burning.

Gradually I began to gather impressions—very unpleasant ones. I became certain that I was being watched intently. Some person or Thing present in the room, though unseen by me, was watching my every movement. I sensed that the ghost, if ghost it was, violently resented my occupation, was intensely hostile, and meant to make things unpleasant for me at the earliest opportunity.

I got up and compelled myself to look in all directions. The candle gave just sufficient light to distinguish objects: the corners of the room were obscure. Wherever I moved I felt that malignant eyes followed me. I kept glancing over my shoulder at every creak of the furniture and floor. It was in the intervals of dead silence that the presence became most imminent, most menacing.

Oh, where was that stealthy watcher whose baleful eyes were fixed upon me? I could see nothing suspicious. I could only feel acutely that we were not alone.

Suddenly my eyes encountered the mirror over the dresser, and as I gazed at this harmless object I became convinced that if I looked full into its surface I would see something horrible.

Then my attention was caught by a soft stealthy noise. Padded footsteps. Something had come near, and was creeping warily round in front of me. I was conscious of

close scrutiny. My scalp tingled as if the hair had risen on end.

Knowing the invisible specter was preparing to strike, I hastened toward the bed, my foremost thought being to guard my sleeping charge. As I have said, the room was in semi-darkness, and in my anxiety I failed to see the rockers of an easy chair which was in my path. I managed to save myself from falling, but could not help making considerable noise.

Fearing that my clumsiness had precipitated a disaster, I stood shaking with apprehension, my forehead damp with the cold sweat of terror. My companion, rudely awakened, was staring at me from the bed. My attempt to reassure her was futile, for she seized my arm and begged me to tell her the truth. Even then, I could not, so I sat down beside her and took her hand.

"Why, your hand is like ice!" she ejaculated, taking it in both of hers.

It was obvious she had not discovered we were not alone. I hated to tell her, but realizing that it would be better to warn her, I did so, clumsily.

"DON'T move, and try not to scream," I muttered hoarsely. "Something, God knows what, is going to happen. The Thing is back again. It is in this room with us now and may strike at any minute. We must face it together. Hold yourself against me. If I can protect you I will."

My teeth were chattering so I could hardly speak. My voice was pitifully unsteady. Lord, how I despised myself! I felt that if something didn't happen, my reason would snap and leave me an easy prey for whatever monster was lurking in the shadows.

The air had become unnaturally cold.

We sat on the bed, huddled together like children, expecting to witness the materialization of some hideous form.

Again my gaze was drawn to the mirror above the dresser. At first I saw nothing, but as I watched with fast-beating heart, the surface became clouded—and then, suddenly, distorted strands of mist writhed like snakes out of the murky glass!

"Cover the mirror—if you value your sanity!" A mysterious voice whispered in my ear. "The Thing can only become visible in the glass. Cover it and keep your back to the wall."

A half-stifled cry broke from my lips. The girl raised her head in alarm. She took one look in the direction of my fixed stare, and at sight of the ghastly, writhing spectacle, she uttered an unearthly scream and hid her face against my shoulder.

The voice persisted: "Go on, cover it, cover it! Why do you remain idle at a time like this? Unless you act quickly, you will see an indescribable horror."

"I must throw something over that glass," I gasped, attempting to get up.

But the girl's arms clung to me.

"No, no!" she cried hysterically. "You mustn't leave me! You promised you wouldn't!"

She began to tremble and to sob uncontrollably. I was too agitated myself to whisper a word of consolation, for I had become dominated by a determination to heed the inner voice. Roughly disentangling myself from her embrace, I got off the bed, swaying unsteadily. My eye caught sight of the towel I had dropped on the floor, and I stumbled toward it crazily. It was like forcing one's way through a mist of icy vapor, so cold and clouded was the atmosphere. Seizing the towel, I took a step in the direction of the looking glass—but I never reached it, for at that instant the room was plunged into darkness.

The candle had been extinguished by an invisible hand! I did not have time to recover from this shock before a despairing shriek froze the blood in my veins. The girl—what ghastly fate had overtaken her the moment I left her side?

An intense rage at the merciless power arraigned against us took possession of me. I wanted to lay hands on this unspeakable assassin, to tear it limb from limb.

I groped my way forward with outstretched arms, feeling for the matches on the table. With unsteady hands I struck one and held it aloft, my eyes riveted in greed upon the spot where the girl had been. But she was gone! The tiny flame flickered for a moment over the empty bed and was snuffed out by a cold draft. I was once again the sole occupant of this hideous, haunted chamber.

It must have been a full minute before I moved, so overcome was I at this latest horror. I sank down upon the mattress, unable even to think coherently.

I lighted the stub of my candle and tried to get a grip on myself. Was it possible that the girl who had been safe on this very spot less than a moment before had been snatched away by some disembodied Thing while I stood almost within reach? Where had she

been taken? How had her body been transported from the room, when the only exit, the door, was securely bolted? I could have

sworn it had not opened in that brief interval of darkness. I rose to investigate, expecting to find it unlocked, if not ajar. But no! The door was still bolted on the inside!

I rushed to the window. Below it was a drop of easily thirty feet, with not the slightest foothold in view.

I returned to the bed in a dilemma. If her abductor had not taken her through the door or window, how—

Then I thought of the shaft beneath the closet floor and my heart contracted with horror. Had the unholy fiend flung her to her death down that fearful chute?

It was only by exerting all my will power that I opened the closet door. One glance was sufficient to confirm my worst fears: the floor boards had been flung aside. A sickening feeling of despair made me giddy. If she had been thrown down that reeking chasm, what chance was there of rescuing her alive?

The thought that Madame Beauchamps might know the secret goaded me into action. Clinging desperately to this slim hope, I ran from the room, descended the stairs like a madman, tore along the lower hall to the kitchen, and finally arrived panting at Madame's closed door, pounding on the panels and calling upon her to come out. In a few seconds she was shaking me back to sanity with a strength that would have done credit to a blacksmith.

It took me less than a minute to relate, rather incoherently, the startling fact that her other guest had just been carried or dropped through the floor of my closet. The stout Frenchwoman's stolid features underwent an eloquent change while I was speaking. Without a doubt she knew something about the matter.

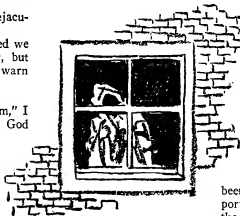
"*Mon Dieu!*" she ejaculated when I paused for breath. "I was sure dey would no return. I have hear no ting for long, long time. When I put you in dat room I no tink of ze hole. I haf clean all tings on dat floor. I do not see dem. And now dey haf come back to make for me more meeschief!"

"What do you mean by 'dey'?" I cried.

She shrugged her broad shoulders.

"Last winter I hear much

(Continued on page 90)



# The Specter in the New HOTEL

Can you imagine a ghostly cat in a New York skyscraper? Here are the **FACTS** about the four-footed demon that haunted the sixteenth floor of a Broadway hotel!

*Note: This amazing story is absolutely true. The names used are the real names of the persons involved, but the name of the hotel has, of course, been withheld.*

**T**HE insistent meowing of a cat resounded through the corridors of New York City's latest residential hotel, situated on upper Broadway.

It was three o'clock in the morning, and a raw February wind was howling out of doors. All the guests of the establishment had long since retired to rest, and now only the night lights were burning.

Again came the meowing, louder than before. Two people heard it this time. One of them was Mr. Louis E. Jallade, the man who had designed the new building. He muttered an anathema against the feline race, and tried to sleep again.

Jallade, at the time, was well known as one of New York's finest architects. Something that was little known about him, however, was his pronounced phobia against cats. All his life he had shuddered whenever he chanced to be near one of the creatures. Once, at a tea, a great gray Persian belonging to his hostess had leaped into his lap, and he had fled from the room in a panic, upsetting cup and saucer as he went. The cry of a cat always made him shiver, but in this particular nocturnal wail there was an unearthly quavering which affected Jallade even more than usual. The *meow* was penetrating, but it seemed to come from far, far away. . . .

The noise continued, heard only by Jallade and one other person in the hotel. Across the hall from the architect's room on the sixteenth floor was the suite of Mr. and Mrs. John Edward Smith. Mrs. Smith had always loved dumb creatures of every kind. She was one of the foremost members of the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and had written several magazine articles dealing with pets and their treatment. At the time, Mrs. Smith was grieving for her own favorite cat which had recently died, and on hearing the cry of distress that sounded out in the hall, something seemed to tug at her



*The group in the corridor shrank back in mortal terror*

heart. There was nothing of menace to her in the wail of the animal. Somewhere, she knew, a creature was appealing for aid. She put on dressing-gown and slippers, and without waking her husband, tiptoed to the door.

She stepped into the hall just at the moment that Jallade, sleepless and furious, opened his own door, a heavy walking stick in his hand.

There, in the corridor between them, sat an enormous black cat, howling plaintively. One of his front paws was as white as if it had been dipped in milk, but by his appearance Mrs. Smith saw at once that the big cat had had

By  
STUART  
PALMER



Jallade burst out of  
his room, shrieking,  
"The cat—oh, my  
God!"

little acquaintance with that or any other food for some time. He was woefully thin, and his black coat was matted and dirty.

Jallade advanced with the walking stick, ordering the cat to scat. But before he could touch the animal, Mrs. Smith had dashed out and picked it up, holding it protectively in her arms.

On the impulse of the moment, Mrs. Smith adopted the black cat, and to silence Jallade's protests and shuddering

pleas that it be given to a hall-boy to dispose of, she slammed the door in his face. She was resolved that the lost creature should find a real home with her—and it did!

The black cat lay at her feet through the rest of the night, as if he knew that at last his troubles were over. At daylight, Mrs. Smith sent out for cream and gave the animal a much-needed banquet.

HER husband took an immediate liking to the big black fellow. Its eyes seemed to fascinate him.

"Why, look here!" he exclaimed suddenly. "They're different colors!"

Sure enough, in the light one eye was yellow and one was emerald green!

That, in itself, was strange enough. But what defied explanation was this: How had the cat been able to climb unmolested to the sixteenth floor of the hotel, when the stair doors were tightly closed and the elevators not running?

"We'll call him Satan," decided Mrs. Smith laughingly. "His eyes look so wicked!"

A few weeks of good care and food had made a new animal of the tom-cat. His black fur was glossy and shining, and his form had filled out. In spite of his obvious alley upbringing the Smiths found him extremely dainty and well-behaved. He spent a good deal of his time on Mrs. Smith's bureau, but never did his light tread misplace so much as a perfume bottle or a vanity case.

Satan was happy; there was no doubt of that. The rules of the hotel prohibited dogs, but allowed cats in the rooms, and every morning Satan's pint of cream was delivered at the door of 1611. Life became a well-ordered and luxurious routine for the big sleek cat, and the Smiths grew

fonder and fonder of him. In many ways he seemed to have an intelligence uncannily human. Sometimes Mrs. Smith would find his vari-colored eyes fixed on her in a stare which seemed to go right through her. But though servants and other guests confessed to creepy feelings when they encountered the animal, the Smiths saw only a cat whom they loved and who returned their affection.

Jallade, however, across the hall, lay awake at night, unable to shake off the hideous sense of the nearness of the hated feline. Sometimes he could hear, or imagined that he heard, its faint *meow* and purring. Once he met Mrs. Smith descending in the elevator with Satan in her arms; Jallade left it at the next floor and walked down.

He made several complaints to the manager, Mr. Guernsey Webb. But in spite of the fact that Jallade had designed the building and owned some shares in the stock of the hotel, his personal aversion to cats was not deemed sufficient reason for ordering the Smiths to get rid of their new pet. Webb suggested that Jallade move to some other room, but the only other one vacant in the new hotel was the suite directly above the Smiths—and their Satan. Such a move would be worse than none, Jallade decided.

THERE was another man in the hotel who had the same prejudice against the race of cats. He was Signor Theodore Gordoni, leader of the orchestra that played the dinner music every evening. Mrs. Smith had taught Satan to walk on a leash, and had, on several occasions, brought him down to the dining room at dinner time. He would sit quietly beneath the table, or on a chair, accepting such morsels as his mistress chose to offer him.

None of the guests objected. In fact, Satan grew to be a favorite among them. He was big and supple now, with a long and beautiful coat of fur. When he was perched on his mistress's shoulder, he looked like a black fox scarf.

Only Jallade objected—and poor Gordoni. For the musician was likewise afraid of cats—particularly afraid of this cat. When he looked across the dining room and saw Satan seated at Mrs. Smith's side, or blinking his green and yellow eyes from under the table, Gordoni would shiver and drop his baton in unaccountable terror. Psychologists call such a tendency "feliphobia"—dread of cats. But had either Gordoni or Jallade ever heard the term, they would have derived small comfort from it in the face of the horrors they were soon to experience.

At any rate, Mrs. Smith wakened one morning to find Satan gone. She and her husband searched high and low, in the bureau drawers and behind the bathtub. But the cat was nowhere to be found. The door had been locked as always, and the window had been open only from the top. But Satan had somehow vanished—as mysteriously as he had come.

A day passed in searching, advertising and inquiring. Then another. But still there was no sign of Satan. The hotel employees disclaimed all knowledge of his whereabouts, and the other guests sympathized with the Smiths and helped in the search.

Only Jallade—and the musician Gordoni—were silent. Then Mrs. Smith suddenly remembered the night when she had first found the cat in the hall; remembered how Jallade had acted.

Had he anything to do with Satan's disappearance? Was there actually a look of subtle triumph in the architect's eyes when they met in the hall? She communicated her worry to her husband, but Mr. Smith shook his head.

"How could Jallade have spirited the cat out of our room when the door was locked? Satan was in his usual place when we went to sleep."

Nevertheless, his wife's suspicions had awakened his own. After all, they both knew that Jallade had done everything in his power to get rid of the cat. Perhaps he had resolved upon abduction—and violence. . . .

That evening Mr. Smith found an opportunity of speak-

ing with several of the maids in private. Careful questioning brought to light a clue.

One of the maids admitted that at five in the morning, on the day of Satan's disappearance, she had seen Thomas Gill, a hall-boy, come down the stairs with a box under his arm. She remembered the incident, she explained, because she had wondered at the time why Gill had chosen to walk down instead of using the elevator. But she had not seen where Gill had gone. . . .

Smith made inquiries regarding Thomas Gill, the hall-boy. He was told that Gill should have been on duty then, but that he was nowhere to be found.

Smith was hot on the trail now. Soon he discovered that the elevator boy remembered having taken Gill and the orchestra leader, Gordoni, up to floor sixteen only a few moments before. He thought he had seen them enter Jallade's room, but he was not sure. . . .

Mr. Smith hastened upstairs, and was about to batter on Jallade's door when he stopped dead. From within came voices, loud voices, and he listened.

Jallade was talking, his voice high and excited. All that Smith could hear was a constant repetition of the phrase: "It's still here, I tell you! It's still here, I can hear it. . . ."

Smith leaned closer. Now he recognized the voice of the hall-boy. Gill was explaining, protesting that he had carried out his orders. He had, he said, opened "the door" with the maid's pass key—and out had come the cat. "And honest, Mister Jallade, I stuck him in a box and took him up to the Hudson River at Eightieth Street. I threw him in, and the box was weighted with a stone. 'That cat couldn't come back!'"

Gordoni's excitable voice cut in, protesting that he, too, was still tormented by the cat. Its eyes had come shining at him out of the darkened halls. He had heard its voice in the pauses of the music. Both men were berating the hall-boy for not having carried out their orders.

Smith tiptoed over to his own door. At last the mystery was solved. Poor Satan had become a martyr to the feline complexes of Gordoni and Jallade.

That night Smith told his wife the whole story, and she, in tears, mentally resolved to tell the architect a few things in the morning. She was inconsolable at the loss of her beloved Satan. Little did she guess, though, what awful consequences were yet to result from her kindly impulse to befriend a homeless cat.

IN the early hours of the morning, the Smiths were awakened by a series of blood-curdling shrieks from across the hall. In a few moments they had joined a little knot of guests out in the hall, debating whether or not to break down the door of Jallade's room.

The problem was solved unexpectedly.

Jallade burst out of his room, shrieking, "The cat—oh, my God!"

The group in the corridor shrank back in mortal terror.

"It's after me again!" he cried, looking furtively back into the darkness of his room. "I can't get away from the cursed thing. . . ."

The manager appeared. "Mr. Jallade, sir! What does this mean?"

"The cat comes back! I had a boy drown it, but it still comes back!"

Haggard, ashen, Jallade blurted out his story. All night long, he said, he had heard the cat's tread above his head, heard it in the wall by the head of his bed. The man was quite evidently neither drunk nor insane; he seemed in the grip of an intense and sincere terror which communicated itself to the startled guests who heard him.

Webb, the manager, however, ventured to laugh. He was sure that whatever had caused the noises could not have been the missing cat. He took a step toward the open door, but Jallade caught his arm, warningly.

"Listen! for God's sake—"



The people in the hall strained their ears. . . . Quavering yet clear, from the darkened room, came the wail of a cat! The unearthly sound seemed faint and far away, but there was no mistaking it. The guests shrank back.

There was a moment of hesitation, and then Manager Webb and Mrs. Smith burst into the room. The voice was Satan's; his mistress was sure of it.

But when the lights were turned on, the disordered room was found to be absolutely empty. The door was shut at once, and a thorough search made—but there was not a sign of the big black cat!

"He must be here somewhere," insisted Mrs. Smith.

At last, though, she too, was forced to give up. The cat was not in the room.

The next morning Thomas Gill made a clean breast of it all, admitting that he had been hired by Jallade and Gordoni to steal the cat and do away with it. He swore that he had thrown the box containing Satan into the Hudson, and that he had seen it sink.

Nevertheless Mrs. Smith still clung to a forlorn hope. After all, she had recognized Satan's voice in the hall that night, and she refused to believe that she had been the victim of an hallucination. The cat must be still alive.

That night things grew worse instead of better. At twelve o'clock Jallade had left his room, swearing never to enter it again. He had been reading, he said, until the light began to hurt his eyes. To rest them, he had snapped out the lamp and sat there smoking his pipe in the dark. Of a sudden, out of the blackness, a furry body had leaped upon his knee. He had felt the touch of claws!

For a moment he had been too paralyzed to move. Then he had flung the thing from him with a mighty effort and turned on the light. But no cat was there. Jallade moved to another hotel that very night.

Even then, Webb insisted that the whole thing was either caused by a strange animal which had somehow wandered into the hotel, or else that Jallade, in his fear of cats, had heard one where none existed. Yet on the evening before Webb, too, had heard the *meow*.

THAT night, the manager was besieged with telephone calls from guests all over the hotel, complaining of the noises made by a cat. The worst of the disturbances, however, were reported on the sixteenth floor. The sound was located, by two complainants, in the wall of a certain room.

Manager Webb was now of the opinion that a cat had somehow become imprisoned between the partitions, and he ordered workmen to tear out the plaster.

*Meows* came from each spot they sounded. But after the wall was opened a yawning black hole was all that rewarded their efforts. No cat was there!

In the entire hotel the Smiths were the only residents who did not hear the caterwauling and meowing that was now a nightly occurrence. Every other guest on the sixteenth floor was driven to desperation by the uncanny wails; but after the episode in Jallade's room, neither of Satan's former friends heard the voice.

On the second day of April, the orchestra leader, Gordoni, climbed the stairs, after the dinner hour was over, to a dressing room on the second floor, where he always changed from his dress suit into street clothes.

The hall was dimly lit, and Gordoni was hurrying. Suddenly he stopped, too stricken by terror to cry out.

Immediately in front of him shone two enormous eyes, that stared at him hypnotically without blinking. One of them was green—the other a shining topaz!

But the conductor's voice rose in a thin agonized shriek of horror when there hurtled at him a snarling, spitting creature that seemed to hover like a bat as it lit on his shirt front. The weight knocked the breath out of him.

Then the animal climbed like a wild beast to his shoulder, slashing him with needle-claws and fangs as it went.

From his shoulder the beast scrambled to the top of his head. Gordoni's arms waved wildly in an effort to free himself from the blinding pain of those slashing claws. Blood trickled into his eyes from the cuts along his forehead, and the frantic musician staggered and fell headlong on the carpet. Running footsteps approached. . . .

A moment later bell-boys found him bloody and torn.

"It's—it's gone, the *maladetta*. . . ." he choked.

Guernsey Webb, by that time, was in command. At last, he thought, he had cornered the "ghost"! The hall ended a few yards farther on, and he knew that whatever had attacked Gordoni must have come from that direction.

SLOWLY and gingerly the little army of bell-boys and porters made its way down the hall. No living creature could have passed that group. And every door on either side was tight shut. But when they came to the end, the corner was bare. No savage cat lurked in the shadows!

Gordoni died in terror to dress his wounds. But Webb was determined to end the thing. Some of his guests had already left, and more would surely go after this.

He asked each guest to phone him at once if anything unusual should happen. Then he waited in his office.

His phone did not ring until late that evening, when an excited woman insisted that she had seen a black cat run down the hall on the sixteenth floor. The animal had gone through the *closed* door of Jallade's former room!

Followed by the hotel servants and two policemen, Webb hurried to the room. It was empty, as he had known it would be, but he motioned for silence and listened. At last it came—that infernal series wail—from the wall behind the head of Jallade's bed!

"Break in the wall!" ordered Webb. At the first sound of the hatchets, Mr. and Mrs. Smith came running over.

Webb shook his head at Mrs. Smith's anxious inquiry as to whether Satan could possibly be in the wall, alive. The masonry had been bricked up airtight when the building was finished, he said. Still, he was going to make sure. . . .

A large piece of the wall crumbled in, leaving a black hole. The men drew back, but Webb took a flashlight,

and peered within. What he saw made him gasp with horror. "It's the cat. . . . I think it's the one you adopted." He turned to the Smiths.

Mrs. Smith excitedly pushed forward. "Is it Satan—poor Satan? Is he alive?"

She pressed forward to look, but suddenly uttered a cry. "He's dead! He's—oh, it's terrible. . . ." Her husband led her from the room as Webb gingerly lifted from a tangle of steam-pipes the dried and mummified body of a cat—a black cat with one white foot that seemed to have been dipped in milk. Obviously the animal had been dead for several months—since, in fact, the hotel was built!

Webb shivered, and drew back. What manner of cat was it that had won the affection of the Smiths? How many deaths had Satan died?



# VENGEANCE

Millions were gone  
from the  
public treasury—and  
Dan Moran,  
highway commissioner,  
lay dead  
with a bullet through  
his brain.  
Did guilt drive him  
to suicide?  
—or was he  
the innocent victim of  
a crooked  
political ring?  
It took a ghost to  
reveal the truth!



The distorted lips  
formed words—but  
no sound issued

"HEY, Hugh, hold up on that story! Hell's broken loose—"

The order, in a rasping bellow which echoed above the bedlam in the local room of the *Morning Record*, came from Bruce, the city editor, who sat hunched over his desk, clutching a telephone.

Startled—for the command was directed at me—I dropped my hands from the typewriter keys upon which I had been pounding for more than an hour, and looked toward my superior. The twitching muscles of his face indicated his excitement as he bent close to the mouthpiece and held the receiver jammed against his ear.

I tried to catch what he was saying. But he had lowered his voice and I could hear nothing above the tumult around me. Pushing back my chair, I rose and moved around to Bruce's desk. Everyone else kept right on working. That is, everyone except James Rooney, the night editor—whose final word was law on the *Record*. He was the highest type of editor, absolutely honest in his conduct of the news, and an indefatigable fighter for any cause he espoused. For a long time he had directed the campaign which the *Record* was waging against the corrupt political ring which for years had plundered the County.

Knowing that I had been writing the lead story for next day—a sensational account of the ring and its theft of more than \$5,000,000 of the taxpayers' money through crooked street-paving contracts—Rooney understood the significance of Bruce's shouted order. Tossing aside the proofs he had

been examining, he, too, moved over to the city editor's desk.

"Stick right where you are—and don't miss anything. I'll send Hugh Wallace right over," were the words we caught as Bruce clapped up the receiver and turned toward us.

"That was Marley, our West Side man," he continued. "He's over at the Holbrook railroad yards—"

"Right in the heart of Tim Servoss' bailiwick, eh?" interrupted Rooney. "What's the Boss been doing now?"

"I don't know that he's done anything—directly," said Bruce. "But, indirectly, he's caused the death of Dan Moran, his Highway Commissioner."

"Good God, Chief! You don't mean that—that Dan's dead?" I gasped. For Moran had been my pal since our school days.

"Marley reports that Dan is dead—a suicide."

"I—I CAN'T believe it," I said. "He just couldn't do such a thing. Why, he's the only honest man in the entire Servoss outfit. I know they've been trying to pin this graft on him, but—"

"All right," said Bruce gruffly. "Then it's up to you to prove it. But here's what Marley reported. A half hour ago a watchman at the yards heard a pistol shot. Investigating, he found a man's body huddled behind a freight shed.

# of the DEAD

By HUGH WALLACE

The Boss was paralyzed with fear



ordering him to have them back by tomorrow or face arrest. Servoss didn't say so, but he let it be inferred that Dan was in so deep that suicide was his only way out."

"I'm off!" I replied. "But if you ever get the truth, you'll find out that those contracts were taken to help frame Dan, and weren't stolen by him."

"Listen, Hugh," said Rooney, keeping pace with me as I put on my coat and hat and headed for the door. "You know why they got Moran—he knew too much. So look out for yourself. The gang doesn't like you because of the way you've been riding them. Don't let them bump you off."

"Thanks, Jim, I'll keep my eyes open. But if those rats did sew Dan up so that he lost his nerve and killed himself, I hope he'll come back from the grave and drive them batty!"

On my way across town in a taxi—a journey which consumed half an hour—I tried to think coherently, though the shock of Dan's death seemed to have numbed my brain. The fact that he had been in the railroad yards caused me no surprise. Everyone living in that section used them as a short cut from the main trolley terminal. But that he had gone there to kill himself—I

simply wasn't going to believe it until I had to.

The taxi came to a sudden, jolting halt. I had reached my destination—one of the gates from which a stairway led to the wide railroad yards below the street level. I kicked at the gate. It was jerked wide instantly and I found myself facing Steve Henley, a policeman Dan and I had known since boyhood, and one who had no use for the Boss or his kind. Recognizing me, he drew me inside and slammed the gate.

"Listen, Steve," and I clutched his arm, "was Dan dead when you reached him?"

"Yes," he replied, speaking in a guarded tone.

"Did—did Dan kill himself?"

"I don't know. Boss Servoss says he did, and the precinct detectives have taken their tip from him and are saying the same thing. The Medical Examiner hasn't arrived yet. But, as Servoss appointed him, he'll probably side with

He was dead, with a bullet-hole in his head. An automatic with one chamber empty was beside him. The body has been identified as Moran's."

"Dan never owned a gun," I blurted out. "He—"

Bruce cut me short with a gesture. "A policeman named Henley happened along and sent the watchman for help. The place where the body was found was not far from the Crescent Hotel where Servoss and his lieutenants have been making their headquarters. Someone tipped the Boss off, and he and some of his cronies arrived as soon as the precinct detectives and the district reporters. Servoss didn't seem particularly cut up because of Moran's violent death."

"He wouldn't be!" I muttered.

"Well, go over and get the story. But here's something else. The Boss told the detectives and the reporters that some of the alleged altered paving contracts had disappeared from the files and that he'd accused Moran of the theft,

the others. I didn't have time to look around much before—"

"Did you hear the Boss say that Dan had taken some papers from the borough offices?"

"Yes, but the detectives found no papers on him. Now listen carefully and then get along. I can't afford to be seen talking to you. The bullet entered the back of Moran's head. The gun found near the body was an old thirty-eight caliber automatic. Now—get this! The gun was old—but the cartridges were new and shiny. I knew you'd be the one the *Record* would send to handle the story, so when I found the empty shell I pocketed it for you. No one knows I found it. Maybe you can make some use of it—"

Plunging down the steps, I hurried toward a lighted freight shed before which the figures of several men were silhouetted. As I came close Marley, our district man recognized me and called my name. Instantly, from a group who had been talking with heads close together, the hulking figure of the Boss detached itself and came toward me, followed by Sam Kaplan, head of the precinct's detective squad.

MARLEY moved aside with a significant gesture toward a dark mass, covered with a blanket, lying close against the wall of the shed. I realized it was my friend's body and turned to face Servoss, determined to get at the truth.

"I'm mighty sorry Moran took this way out," began the Boss, halting before me, "and I appreciate your feelings because of your friendship for him. Of course he was in bad, but if he'd only come clean I'd have done my best to save him from jail."

"Never mind that," I replied. "It's too late now. What were the papers you said Dan took from the borough offices?"

"I can't go into details, Wallace. That matter will have to go to the District Attorney. All that I'll say is that they were paying contracts and had to do with the jobs you and the *Record* say were crooked." His mouth twisted into a sneer.

"Why do you think Dan took them?"

"I don't think—I know! I've been over those contracts several times lately and had them all together in one file case. Tonight Moran went to the offices after everyone else had gone home, took those contracts and was seen examining them."

"How do you know?" I asked.

"A watchman saw him and telephoned me at the Crescent Hotel where I was holding a conference."

"You went to City Hall to investigate, of course?"

"Yes, and alone. I wanted to learn what Moran was doing—without anyone being along who might leak to the newspapers." This was said viciously.

"Did you see him?"

"No, he was gone. I examined the file and found the papers missing. I went back to the Crescent, intending to send the boys away and then locate Moran at his home. But I hadn't much more than arrived at the hotel when word reached there of his suicide."

I was so angry I could have struck him down. My guess was that, on learning Dan had taken the contracts—documents which, in some way, could have been used to fasten the graft upon Servoss and his ring—the Boss had sent one of his gunmen to recover the papers and "get" Moran.

"Has—Dan's body been searched?" I resumed.

"Yes, by Detective Kaplan. And," with a leer, "several persons, including myself, watched him do it. The missing contracts are gone. Moran destroyed them before killing himself."

"That's only a guess," I blurted out; I couldn't help it.

"It will be evidence—soon. Moran had no other papers upon him, not even an envelope. That's the story." He turned away.

"Do you want to see Moran's body?" asked Kaplan, taking a flashlight from his pocket. I nodded and fol-

lowed him to where the black mass lay. As the detective pulled aside the blanket, I couldn't suppress a cry. Dan, my pal, lay there upon his back, his face ghastly in the light which played over him.

With every sense on the alert I bent closer. At once I noted a significant fact: the front of the clothing showed smudges of dirt. He had fallen face down.

"You turned the body over," I said.

"Sure. We had to search him."

I turned away to hide any betrayal of feeling. The documents had undoubtedly been taken immediately following the murder, but the Boss and Kaplan had searched the body to make certain Moran carried no weapon. Had one been discovered on him later, it would have wrecked their suicide story.

At that point there was a commotion from the steps and the district Medical Examiner and an assistant came into the light. The former shook hands with Servoss, and listened to the Boss' version of the "suicide."

The medical men turned Dan's body over and examined the wound by flashlight. I bent over with them and noted that the bullet had entered close behind the right ear.

"Yes, the pistol was held close," said the Examiner, "though in this black hair you can't see powder marks. The bullet went from right to left and is lodged above the left ear. It's suicide all right."

I smothered an oath as he spoke, for, in a flash, something occurred to me—something which would have turned the Boss cold.

Dan had been left-handed! Had he killed himself he would not have held the revolver in his right hand—and in no other way could he have inflicted the wound described by the Examiner.

My suspicion that he had been murdered now became a conviction. And the killer had been so near he had held the revolver almost against Dan's head. My deduction was that the slayer was a person known to Moran, one who came upon him openly and talked with him until he was off his guard. Then he did the job and left the gun to make the murder look like a suicide.

My reverie was interrupted by Kaplan's voice, "Here's the gun if you want to see it."

I took the weapon, broke it and noted that the shells of the four remaining cartridges were new and shiny, like the one Henley had given me.

"We haven't found the empty shell," said the detective. "I suppose it's been trampled into the dirt."

I NODDED and handed back the automatic. But not before I had noted several rust spots on the barrel, the kind which frequently appear upon weapons kept in the vicinity of salt water. Yet the town was a considerable distance inland. Did the person who had used the pistol come from some point near the sea—where, perhaps, he lived? It seemed a clue worth looking into. . . .

"Listen, Wallace." It was the Boss addressing me again. "The Medical Examiner has given permission to have Moran's body removed to his home. But it would be a crime to send it over like this; it would give his wife too great a shock. I'll have an undertaker look after it and send it over the first thing in the morning. Why don't you go there now and see her? You're intimately acquainted with the family. Tell Mrs. Moran if she wants anything to call upon me and I'll see her through."

"I'll go to her—as soon as I send in the story," I replied, then hastened across the yards to an all night drug store to telephone my office. I was certain now, that I possessed sufficient facts to warrant me in directing the *Record* to print the story of Dan's murder at the instance of the ring.

But I had not gone far before my anger cooled and reason began asserting itself. With my friend gone forever, the really big task which lay before me was to remove all stigma of disgrace from his name. To announce that

Moran had been murdered and give my reasons for believing so would probably convince most persons that he had met with foul play. But that would not get at the root of the crime—the ring.

No, the better method would be to keep my trump card under cover for the present. That would give me time to work toward my objective without being under constant surveillance. My one regret was that Dan's family must, for a while, rest under a shadow. But I could see no other way out. . . .

Consequently, the story I telephoned the *Record* did not differ greatly from those which appeared in the other city newspapers next morning.

After I had finished my call I hastened in the direction of the Moran home, not only to console Dan's widow, Agnes, but in the hope that there I might obtain some additional light on the tragedy.

When I entered I found several neighbors doing their best to comfort the little household. Agnes sat rocking one of the babies. Her lids were lowered and there were wide circles around her eyes, but she was not weeping.

For a moment or two I remained in the doorway, my throat swelling until it hurt, my eyes swimming. Then some one noted me and bent and whispered to Agnes. She looked up, and when our eyes met, she uttered a great sob and stretched forth a trembling hand. However, before I could reach her she arose, placed the baby in the arms of another woman and, with a murmured word, motioned me to take her upstairs.

In her own room, she grasped my hands and tried to speak. But words failed her, and she slumped into a chair and began to cry hysterically. Finally, however, I drew a chair close beside her and urged her to control herself.

With a suddenness which startled me she straightened up, wiped away her tears and looked me full in the eyes. "I am strong again, Hugh—and I want the truth. You've seen—Dan's body?"

I nodded.

"Tell me, Hugh, do you believe he—took his own life?"

Of course I intended to tell her what I believed and why. But I hesitated to speak.

"I knew it," she said hoarsely. "I knew it! Dan didn't do what they say. He couldn't. They killed him, those terrible men, because they feared—" She paused, one hand closing over her heart, her eyes blazing fury, then she went on:

"Oh, why didn't he listen to my warning?"

"What do you mean—warning of what?"

"FOR a long time I've known the truth, that Servoss and the others were trying to make Dan the scapegoat. I begged him to give up his job. But he wouldn't; said he couldn't quit under fire. Then, tonight, he told me they were getting ready to frame him and he'd have to do something drastic to protect himself.

"He told me that Servoss and the others were going to hold a meeting at the Crescent Hotel and that he'd be able to get what he wanted from the City Hall without being interfered with. His intention was to take from the file the paving contracts Servoss had kept there for months—contracts which Dan said had been altered since they were first awarded—and compare them with duplicates of the originals which he kept here in the house.

"Don't interrupt now, for I want to tell you of a strange experience I had while he was explaining his plan. You must believe me! Suddenly I seemed to sense a third presence in the room—a presence which I could neither see nor define, but which I felt. Then—this is the truth, Hugh!—

a voice whispered in my ear warning me that if Dan carried out his intention he would meet with disaster. Frightened, I looked about—for the voice was that of my dead mother!"

"What are you saying Agnes?" I gasped.

"Don't make me repeat, Hugh, I can't! I'm telling you—everything, for I must depend upon you to clear Dan's name. I begged him not to go, pleaded with him, for the mysterious warning had filled me with dread. But he wouldn't listen; he took his contracts, and now—" She paused with a gesture more eloquent than words, then covered her eyes and wept softly.

I looked away from her, the better to think clearly. Now I had another clue—Dan's purpose in going to the City Hall that night. To me that explained the reason for the killing.

SOMEONE had seen him comparing the crooked contracts with the papers he had brought from home—probably one of the Boss' private detectives posing as a watchman. The instant he had notified Servoss, the latter had guessed the truth and been plunged into a panic of fear. He had to get hold of those originals. Whether Dan had taken the altered documents, as the Boss had alleged, was a question still.

The point was that Servoss had acted quickly; sent some one to do away with Moran before he could reach his home. And the murderer had done his work thoroughly, removing every scrap of paper from the dead man's clothing.

"What are you thinking about, Hugh? Why don't you tell me what I want to know?"

"Just a moment, Agnes, and I will. Did Dan carry a revolver tonight?"

"No, he never owned or used one." Her reply came clearly, without hesitation.

"Now a more intimate question. Is the family bank account very large?"

"I know why you ask," she said, tears again filling her eyes. "You're thinking about the graft matter. You

haven't been here much lately or you'd know how things are with us. Actually, we have only a few hundred dollars saved. And even though Dan wanted us to have the things other people had, he wouldn't take a dishonest dollar."

She choked up and made a gesture signifying she had reached the end of her endurance, then closed her eyes, waiting for me to tell my story. This I did fully, explaining all I had learned, the clues I possessed and what I hoped to prove.

When I had finished she rose and rested her hands upon my shoulders.

"God bless you, Hugh. I know you'll do your best. And—I shall ask the spirits of my mother—and Dan—to help us."

Next morning I telephoned to Rooney and told him I had gained some information concerning Moran which I desired to discuss with him in private. His reply was to come to his home immediately. I was prepared to tell him every fact I knew.

Rooney listened, with few interruptions, until I had concluded my recital, then sat for some moments in deepest thought.

"Hugh," he said finally, "I agree absolutely with your deductions. However, while we may feel certain that Moran was killed and robbed by one of the Boss' hirelings, it probably will be a mighty hard thing to prove. Still, you have my permission to go ahead and I'll back you to the limit. Work slowly and under cover so they



don't suspect your game. In time something may leak out which will put you on the right track. And, until something definite breaks, the things you have told me better remain a secret between us."

My first move to gain a position where I could be in close touch with the ring leaders most of the time was to have myself assigned to City Hall. In time I managed to make friends with all the officials—except Servoss. He and I went out of our ways to avoid each other.

However, from others I learned much about him. The information was surprising. Formerly he had softened his iron rule with a show of joviality and much loud laughter. But, almost from the time Dan was found dead, his manner had changed. He grew irritable, morose; he seldom smiled and almost entirely abandoned his custom of spending his evenings at the Crescent Hotel or at some of the political clubs. I kept track of this change in his behavior with ever increasing interest, wondering just how much of it was attributable to his share in Moran's death.

But nearly two months passed in which I made practically no progress. I retained—pe, however, for a rather unusual reason. Almost nightly, just before I went sound asleep, I seemed to feel Dan's presence near me and seemed to hear him utter words of encouragement, though what was said I never could recall. I figured that while these experiences were only half dreams they somehow were meant as good omens for my ultimate success. Had I been able to foresee the future, I would have given them far more serious thought.

**T**HE break in my weeks of marking time came one morning when I reported at the City Hall. It began with the amazing news that Servoss had suddenly been taken very ill and, leaving his family behind, had gone to his seaside home at Northpoint, to recover. Some persons argued that he had simply gone away to prepare for the election due in the fall. But I doubted this, for he had taken with him his physician, James Anderson, whom I long had known. The latter fact argued that the Boss was really quite ill.

It was then that a recollection came to me which set me to trembling and suggested a possibility of which I had never even dreamed. I remembered that the barrel of the gun with which Dan had been killed had showed rust spots such as are caused by continued exposure to salt water dampness. Had that gun come from Servoss' shore home? Had he brought it to the city and turned it over to one of his gunmen? Or—

#### *Was Servoss the murderer of Dan Moran?*

If the latter were true—and the more I thought about the suggestion the more it impressed me—it would account for the astounding change which had taken place in the once jocular and ruthless Boss.

Several days passed in which I debated my new suspicion and matured a plan to take advantage of the situation. What I fixed upon was to leave my work in the city, get as close to the Servoss place as possible and trust to circumstances to enable me to follow my hunch.

I obtained an indefinite leave of absence from Rooney, and headed for Northpoint, arriving there at night and establishing myself in a hotel within less than a mile of the Servoss estate.

Although I had made no definite plans, something which occurred next day—a happening which I could not have anticipated—determined my course for me. I arose early, ate breakfast, then started for a walk with the intention of familiarizing myself with the locality.

As I neared the Post Office I was surprised to see Anderson, Servoss' doctor, emerge carrying considerable mail, and head for an automobile parked at the curb. Involuntarily I called his name and hurried forward when he paused and looked around. He shook hands, but his greeting was forced and his appearance amazed me. His face was drawn, his skin sallow and he seemed to have aged

greatly since I had last seen him just a few weeks before. "What are you doing here?" The words were uttered with a gasp.

"Nothing in particular. Been working hard, needed a vacation and decided to rest up out here."

For a moment he studied me with eyes which fairly burned. Then,

"I don't believe you, Hugh. You're here to learn about Servoss. What have you heard concerning his condition?"

Anderson's query told me that something was amiss at the Servoss place. And, judging by his appearance, it was serious—something which I ought to know. However, before I could question him, he insisted that I get into the car and ride with him. For a long time he drove without speaking but finally he turned off into a side road and halted the machine.

"Hugh," he began, his voice trembling, "never in my life have I needed a confidant as I do now. Something has happened down here which I must discuss with someone. But before I tell my story—the most fantastic one you ever listened to—you must promise not to betray me, for that would mean my ruin."

"I'll keep your confidence," I replied warily, "if there's nothing criminal involved."

He hesitated briefly, then: "I've got to talk to you no matter what you decide to do. But first I want a truthful answer to this—are you an utter disbeliever in the supernatural?"

His query, so unexpected in the circumstances, held me silent for a moment. But before I could reply he grasped my arm with a crushing grip.

"You hesitate," he whispered hoarsely. "You are not a disbeliever. Thank God! Now I can speak freely—"

"Go ahead, Doctor. I'm with you," I assured him.

"Then listen, and understand that everything I say is the absolute truth—the truth, from one who used to laugh at ghosts as myths. But I know better now, for I have seen one."

"You—have seen—a ghost?" I asked in amazement. "Yes. But you must let me tell my story in order."

It would take too long to repeat all the things he said, his frequent pleas that I believe him and my interruptions when I began to realize the amazing significance of his statements. But, very briefly, this was the purport of his confidence.

He had been the Servoss family physician for three years, though the Boss had never required his services until after Moran's death. Then the big fellow's nerves appeared to give way and he was able to continue his tasks only by a great effort of will, assisted by powerful drugs. Finally he could keep up no longer. So, accompanied by Anderson, he had removed to his shore home—where he frequently spent week ends—to recuperate. With him he brought many packages of documents, which he placed in the desk in the living room adjoining his bed chamber.

**S**ERVOSS grew steadily worse instead of better. Such sleep as he obtained was in the daytime. For at night he insisted upon sitting up, fully dressed, in his room with all the lights burning. He would not permit Anderson to remain with him, so the doctor usually retired early to his chamber adjoining the living room.

Then came the amazing revelation. Each night, around twelve o'clock, Anderson was aroused by cries from the Boss. At first, when he rushed into the next room to investigate, his employer insisted he had dozed and dreamed. Later he admitted he thought he had seen someone in the room, though the windows were always fastened and the inner blinds covering them barred.

"I figured he was the victim of hallucinations," Anderson went on, "but yesterday matters reached a crisis which convinced me otherwise. He paced his room most of the day and in the evening asked if I had brought along a

revolver. When I replied in the affirmative, he borrowed it without explanation. Determined to learn the reason for my patient's wild behavior, I left my door open a little that night and remained awake, watching through the crack. Now I wish to God I hadn't! But get this next point—Just as I heard one of the house clocks striking twelve, a phantom entered the room through one of the barred windows—"He paused and wiped his parched lips with trembling fingers.

"Did—did you recognize it?" I gasped, my intuition warning me of what was coming.

"Yes. It—was the counterpart of Dan Moran."

"Are you positive—certain?" I was shaking him in the frenzy of my excitement.

"I might have thought differently afterward—though I knew Dan intimately—if it hadn't been that Servoss shouted his name, coupled with an oath, and raised the revolver. But at that instant the specter vanished."

"HE must have seen Dan's spirit before, possibly even back in the city. That's probably the reason why his eyes gave way—"

"That's what I believe," Anderson interrupted. "But now I must get at the bottom of this matter or I'll think I'm as badly off as Servoss. Only—I haven't the nerve to do it alone. You must stand by me; that is, unless you're afraid."

"I'm not afraid of Dan's spirit," I said, though my heart was not in my reply.

"I'll count on you, Hugh, to share the watch with me tonight. If you say you won't, I'll quit now and return to the city by the next train. I couldn't face another night in that house alone."

It was some time before he became sufficiently quiet to tell me what I was to do after dark. And when he set me down and drove away he presented such a pitiable appearance that I wasn't certain he'd keep his part of the bargain.

Returning to my room, I spent the remainder of the day in a fever of uncertainty. For, though I am no coward in ordinary circumstances, I dreaded this ordeal with the supernatural. Only the thought that something might occur which would help me to clear Dan's name kept me from hopping a train back to town.

It was about eleven o'clock when, in a cold sweat and trembling, I reached the Servoss estate and slunk into the shrubbery near a side door, the hiding place Anderson had designated. And there I crouched without daring to move lest I make some noise which would defeat my purpose. Finally, when it seemed as if I could stand the inaction no longer, a shadow appeared from the direction of the house and Anderson grasped both my hands, babbling his thanks that I had kept my promise.

"Come," he said at last, dragging me along with him. "It is almost midnight. I had to wait until Servoss dozed before I dared to leave the house."

What happened within the next half hour I find hard to recall entirely, for never had so many whirling incidents been crowded into so brief a space of my life. As I remembered it later, we crept softly up the stairway and entered the doctor's room. In absolute silence we sat in the darkness, waiting. The first stroke of twelve from a nearby clock set my pulses to pounding, but my companion grasped me roughly and pushed me before him toward a shaft of light coming through the partially open door to the Boss' quarters.

Peering through, I saw Servoss crouched in a chair beneath a cluster of blazing lights. He was wide awake and held a revolver thrust before him, while he watched the windows he faced with wide, staring eyes. Before I recovered from the shock of his altered appearance stark horror overcame me. While the sound of the gong striking midnight still rang through the house, the inner barred shutters of a window were hurled back, and on a gust of

damp air, an unearthly, shadowy figure swept into the room.

To my dying day, I'll never forget that figure. For it was Dan Moran! The eyes of the specter blazed with fury—and the distorted lips formed words—but no sound issued. The Boss was paralyzed with fear.

Suddenly, to my amazement, the phantom turned its head and looked directly toward the opening in which I crouched. I tried to cry aloud, to speak his name. But I could not. However, Dan's spirit seemed to understand. For it nodded, turned, then placed its hands upon the great desk near the Boss as if to open it. Almost I thought I caught the words, "Murderer, thief!"

The next second a cry of rage echoed through the room as Servoss regained control of himself, leaped to his feet and emptied his weapon in the direction of the ghostly visitor. A weird laugh followed the final shot and the phantom moved in the direction of the shrieking wretch. But it never reached him. For Servoss, after hurling the weapon at his shadowy tormentor, raced across the room and leaped through the open window. As the death cry of the man who had hurled himself upon the rocks below reached my ears, the specter was snuffed out. Then I fainted.

When I recovered consciousness, Anderson was bending over me, slapping my cheeks and hands.

"I've been outside," he said dully. "Servoss is dead. We must telephone the authorities."

For some reason—probably because I realized the Boss had paid the full penalty for his crime—a strange calm came over me and I was again able to think coherently.

"Go ahead and call them," I replied. "But first we must decide upon what we will tell. We can't repeat what we actually saw, for practically no one would believe us."

"I have it!" he said. "We'll say that Servoss suffered a nervous breakdown and came here to recover. Instead, he grew worse and tonight, after emptying his revolver at an imaginary intruder, committed suicide by leaping from the window."

"That will do," I agreed. "Now, for another matter which is of vital importance to me. For a long time I've been convinced that Servoss killed Moran. Probably you think the same thing, after what you have seen. I'm going to search this place in the hope of discovering something which will clinch my belief. And if I do, I'm going to print the facts pointing to Servoss' guilt, for I am pledged to clear Dan's name."

He nodded, then turned away to telephone the police. I immediately hurried to the great desk, for now I recalled that Dan's specter had moved as though to open it, and in doing so had driven Servoss into the mad fury which had terminated in his death.

MY hunch proved correct. In no time I had uncovered all the evidence I thought was necessary to prove my case and make others share my belief that Servoss was Dan's murderer. In one of the desk's many compartments I found a packet containing Moran's copies of the original paving contracts as well as those which had been fraudulently altered and which Dan had been accused of stealing. In a drawer I located a box of new cartridges from which five had been removed—no doubt those Servoss had used to load the murder weapon. Comparing the unused shells with the empty one Henley had given me, I found them to be identical.

Previous to Servoss' funeral, the *Record* printed only an account of his breakdown and suicide. But, on the day following the services, we published every fact I had learned—backed by photographs of the documents I had taken from the desk—everything except the appearance of Dan's phantom. And not only did the story reestablish Moran's good name and remove the shadow of shame from his family, but it resulted in the downfall of the ring in the election which was held that fall.

# My STRANGE Adventure

By

HUGH DOCRE  
PURCELL

As told to

W. Adolphe Roberts

FROM time to time, I have written accounts of my psychic experiences for this magazine. Some of them—the battle, for instance, which my brother Owen and I waged with the mind reader Daniel Buwalda—have had unique occult significance. Others seem less important to me, as the years go by. But the story I am now about to tell is the one which, come what may, I can never forget. The bizarre quality of terror in the experience has eaten into my brain like an acid.

Immediately following the violent turmoil of the Buwalda affair, I found myself at a loose end, spiritually. My brother had withdrawn himself entirely from me. He was in seclusion, working out the details of a complicated plan to chart the law of telepathy. I tried to adjust myself to the old routine: days spent at my desk in a Wall Street broker's office; evenings passed with a crowd of normal, fun-loving young people in Brooklyn, where I live. I was tacitly engaged to marry a girl named Roberta Collins, a former school chum of my sister, but it seemed impossible for me to pay her the attention she naturally expected as my fiancée. I was bored with the endless round of dances, bridge parties and midnight jaunts in second-hand roadsters. Roberta lost patience with me, and said she would be just as well pleased if she never saw me again. I could not blame her.

In this crisis, it occurred to me to look up an old friend, John Lang, with whom I had conducted some of my earliest experiments in spiritualism. He had had no connection with my recent plunge into the darker occult mysteries, and for this I was thankful. I needed the companionship of a man who understood my hobby, but who would not remind me of the Buwalda case.

So, little dreaming what the result was to be, I phoned Lang and told him I would like to call. He greeted me warmly, yet there was an appreciable hesitation in his voice before he responded to my suggestion.

"It's this way, old fellow," he said. "My evenings are pretty well taken up, just now. I'm interested in a girl, and I'm seldom home. But I'd be tickled to death to have



"I'll not give messages about this!" the medium cried. "It's too terrible! That tombstone—dripping red—"

you meet her. Suppose you join us for dinner tonight at Joe's Chop House on Fulton Street."

I had a feeling of disappointment, even of annoyance, at the mention of a girl. But I answered that of course I'd be happy to join them.

That was how I came to make the acquaintance of Sulka Kopernik, who cast upon men as singular a spell as it has ever been my lot to encounter.

I WAS struck by her appearance the moment I entered the restaurant and spotted the table where she and Lang were waiting for me. Her head, poised on a long but graceful neck, was remarkable for three things—the yellow eyes, like those of a cat; the full red lips, most voluptuous in their contours yet with something cruel about them; and the thicket of black curls, which rioted so luxuriantly as to make her seem top-heavy. These features, indeed, especially the mouth and hair, would have been less striking if she had had a head of normal size. But her face was exquisitely small, with delicate cheek bones sloping down to a little pointed chin. The effect was fantastic, what with those lips, as sensuous as a scarlet rose, and that inky halo of her hair.



# with a VAMPIRE

*The girl from Prague cast as singular  
a spell upon men  
as Heaven ever permitted  
yet only one of her victims  
ever learned  
her  
unholy secret*



*Sulka Kopernik was staring at the scene with wide, fascinated eyes*

I stared at her in a sort of bewitched amazement while Lang introduced me. I was conscious of a wave of attraction between us. It was not exactly that I liked her, but she fascinated me, and I felt absurdly pleased that she should greet me with so warm a smile.

"What an odd name you have! It's very pretty," I remarked. "Sulka Kopernik!"

"It is a Czecho-Slovakian name. I am from Prague," she answered, with a trace of an accent.

"But you have been in this country a long time?"

"About ten years. My mother brought me over after the war—but she soon died." The yellow eyes clouded.

I turned my attention to Lang for the first time. His face wore a look of complete infatuation.

"Sulka is a wonderful girl," he beamed. "She taught herself English and worked her way through business college. She's considered the star stenographer in the law office where she works. I'm mighty glad to have you two know one another."

As dinner progressed, I learned that Sulka lived by herself in a small apartment in the Columbia Heights section. Also, it became clear why Lang had warned me that I would seldom find him home. It wasn't simply that he was

gaining on my emotions. Moreover, my sense of loyalty to John made me furious at her for leading me on as openly as she did. Luckily, he appeared not to notice that anything was amiss.

We finished dining a little after eight o'clock, and John leaned forward with a mysterious air.

"I've got a surprise for you both," he said. "A new spiritualistic circle has opened up in Flatbush, and they say the medium gets great results. We'll hop into my car and be out there in half an hour."

"MY Lord, why?" I cried resentfully. "I should think you'd gone deeply enough into spiritualism not to put any stock in the doings of semi-public circles where an admission fee is charged."

"Don't throw cold water on it that way," he replied, aggrieved. "Sulka is just a beginner, and she'll get a thrill out of this. Besides, there's more than one kind of circle. Usually, they're the bunk, I'll admit, but sometimes you find one where a lot of power is developed."

"This one calls itself a 'church,' I suppose, to get around the police regulations," I jeered.

"Yes. A woman named Mrs. Susan Thompson runs it."

courting Miss Kopernik—I had assumed they were engaged—but he was spending practically every evening at her apartment.

"John and I are following up some curious studies together," she said, by way of explanation.

I squirmed uneasily, for the last thing I was in the mood to hear about at that moment was the occult, and I knew that any "studies" undertaken by John Lang were certain to be along those lines. At the same time a more serious consideration was troubling me. I didn't like the uncanny hold that the girl Sulka was rapidly

"All right, we'll go," I conceded ungraciously. "And we'll likely be treated to some amateur fortune-telling for our pains."

If I had only guessed! But our contact with the Thompson woman was too brief to enable me to realize that she alone could have provided me with the key to a mystery.

We arrived at the old-fashioned frame house in Flatbush, paid a small fee at the door and entered a parlor where perhaps a dozen persons of all ages were paying close attention to the sayings of the stout, matronly Mrs. Thompson. She was making a series of vague predictions about the recovery of lost objects, the matrimonial prospects of her female clients, and kindred matters of relatively little moment.

A FEW minutes after we had seated ourselves, however, the medium closed her eyes, passed her hand over her forehead and commenced to pant, as she twisted her body from side to side in her large armchair beside the piano.

"Oh, my!" she gasped. "I get an awful queer impression. There's blood in this room—blood and the grave! But I can't tell whether it has to do with murder. Death? . . . I don't know. There's a tomb connected with it—all dripping red. Yet I don't have the regular feeling that comes when the spirits tell me someone is going to die."

She was silent for a moment, and then, staggering to her feet: "I'll not give messages about this!" the medium cried. "It's too terrible. That tombstone—dripping red—" She shuddered convulsively. "Everybody will please leave at once. Those that feel cheated can get their money back at the door."

Sulka was staring at the scene with wide, fascinated eyes. The girl seemed as horrified as I was.

A number of people protested quite vehemently, and one or two of the women tried to persuade Mrs. Thompson to go on. But the stout medium was firm, in her hysterical way. She gave no further details about her impressions, and she failed to name anyone as having been the cause of them. In the matter of continuing the séance, however, she knew exactly where she stood. It would endanger her health to work any longer that night, she declared, and the crowd must go.

When we found ourselves on the street again, I looked curiously at John and Sulka Kopernik.

"That's a funny proposition," I said. "The woman was not faking, and she must be a real sensitive, after all. But what was she driving at? It doesn't click with any experience I've ever had."

"I haven't the least idea," said John. "She never pulled anything like that before."

"She was prophesying something for me," declared Sulka slowly. "I know it because my heart pained me while she spoke, and I felt cold all over."

"For God's sake, don't talk that way, Sulka," protested John. "It's just that she scared you with that gruesome stuff about a tombstone dripping with blood. Your doctor warned you that you had a weak heart. I guess we'd better lay off spiritualism, if a shock like this brings on an attack."

"I am not scared," the girl cried, stamping her foot, in sudden, unreasonable anger. "And I will not be treated as an invalid, when I feel strong—yes, stronger than you, or that medium person, or anybody tonight, except Mr. Purcell!" She threw me a strange glance. "Take me home at once, and we'll hold a séance of our own."

I made no comment as we crowded into John's small roadster. Sulka was in the middle, and I could have sworn that, despite the restricted space, she contrived to draw away from him and lean slightly against me. Her trailing hand rested upon my knee. I felt a magnetic thrill shoot through me—not wholly pleasurable, either, though the girl fascinated me. I was even aware of a certain degree of fear at her touch. It seemed ghastly that she should be suffering from heart trouble, and I trembled as if a dead woman's

hand had touched me. I drew away in revulsion.

The next moment the girl threw her head back and burst into a peal of incongruous laughter. I looked sidewise at her. The light from a street lamp enabled me to see clearly her parted lips, voluptuous and red. For the first time, I noted that her teeth, with the exception of the two middle incisors in the upper jaw, were abnormally pointed.

"If anyone was frightened, it was Mrs. Thompson, the medium—frightened of me!" she shrieked.

"Hush! That's a crazy thing to say," muttered John unhappily.

Our talk for the rest of the trip back was commonplace, and I had recovered my poise by the time we reached Sulka's apartment. The two rooms she lived in were attractively furnished, but they do not stand out in my memory as revealing any singularity of taste on her part. A divan in the parlor was strewn with gaily colored cushions, among which the girl lolled, as she ordered John about with mock tyranny. She had him bring her a pack of cards and started to tell his fortune, but before she had gone very far with this childish amusement, she capriciously threw the deck aside and called for a ouija board. She handled it clumsily, and clearly did not know how to use it. I paid almost no attention to what she was doing, but kept my eyes fastened on her face, so like that of a beautiful young witch.

The thickest of black curls now struck me as being her most amazing feature. This hair was too virile, too abundant, to be wholesome. Surely it must sap the strength of her entire body, I thought. No wonder she looked frail, and had such delicate, semi-transparent hands, a neck so slender that it seemed scarcely able to support the burden of her overweighted head.

It was John Lang who broke the silence that had fallen.

"Quit fooling, Sulka," he pleaded impatiently. "You know we never get results from the ouija. Let's try something that works."

She raised her eyes and gave him an enigmatic stare.

"All right—the table," she answered. "But don't blame me if you go into one of your trances."

"What's that?" I asked, turning to him. "Does Miss Kopernik hypnotize you?"

"Oh, no! It's a sort of self-hypnosis that comes over me when we experiment with the table."

"Do you recall afterward what has happened to you?"

"I do not. My mind is a complete blank."

"Then what's the point?"

"It seems that I talk a lot—say queer things. Sulka keeps track of them."

"Yes," the girl cut in hurriedly, "and sometimes he gets mad at what I tell him. He swears he couldn't have uttered such nonsense. That's why I warned him not to blame me tonight."

"I feel mighty weak, too, when the trance is ended," John said.

"That's bad business, especially for amateurs," I commented, and told myself that John was by no means looking as well as he should. I hadn't noticed it before, but in comparison with his appearance a few months earlier, he seemed haggard. "Better give up the idea of a séance to-night," I advised.

BUT Sulka cried out in protest, and, being a woman, she had her way. A light table was moved over beside the divan. John and I sat in chairs on one side of it. Sulka knelt among her cushions, balancing herself upon her toes and extending her arms at full length to rest her fingertips on the table.

I was, and am, a powerful medium for this kind of séance. Yet I had never known results to be at the same time so negative and so sinister as they were that evening. The table commenced to quiver. I felt the usual vibrations pulsing in the wood. But in less than five minutes—before

any strong manifestation had had time to develop—John slumped back in his chair unconscious, and the table went dead.

I gazed at my friend, astounded. His eyes and mouth were closed, and he breathed gently through his nose. None of the ordinary symptoms of hypnosis were present. He was in a heavy narcotic sleep, from which I could not rouse him, though I slapped him on the shoulder and ordered him sharply to awaken.

Slowly, I turned my head toward Sulka Kopernik. She was not looking at John. Her eyes, which had grown enormous and brilliantly yellow, like condensed sunlight, were fixed upon me.

"Do his—his trances—always take this course?" I muttered.

"Not always. He generally speaks, but tonight he will say nothing. I know the signs," she answered in a curious, high-pitched voice.

Instinctively aware that she was deceiving me on some vital point, I countered by asking: "Can you wake him? It's a dangerous condition—"

"Don't you feel sleepy yourself?" she interrupted.

I passed my hand over my forehead. Actually, I felt slightly drowsy, but there was no danger of my succumbing, as John had, to the unknown malign influence in that room.

She did not wait for an answer. Leaping from the divan, she ran about the room, clapping her hands and laughing hysterically.

"It's all right!" she cried. "You don't have to be asleep. I can kiss you anyway, and he'll never know."

As I got to my feet, I swear I thought she had suddenly gone mad. But it was not insanity that shone from her strange eyes, and unaccountably my own will became weaker than water. Lured by her beauty, I believed myself already more than halfway in love with her. When she finally halted by the fireplace, I advanced toward her, and the next instant my arms were about her and our lips had met.

We exchanged a single terrible kiss. How am I to describe it? I experienced a moment of intense ecstasy, and then—her sharp teeth stabbed into my lower lip! The pain was considerable, for the wound which had been inflicted bled freely; but the mental horror that surged through me was far more acute than the pain.

I suspected now with what sort of creature I had to deal. Tearing myself loose, I threw her from me and felt no compunction at seeing her stumble over a chair and fall flat upon the divan.

She lay face downward for a few minutes, uttering no sound. When she finally pulled herself together and arose, she looked grievously weary and beaten. The color was all drained from her cheeks. Only her lips were still red.

"I'm sorry," she said listlessly. "I did that because—because I couldn't help it. I really love John."

"I don't believe you," I replied curtly.

She shrugged her shoulders. "What does it matter what anyone thinks! A curse is on me. But we can wake John between us. Let us try."

Had my friend been hypnotized, the person responsible could at once have called him out of his trance. But Sulka Kopernik was unable to do this, and I was thereby convinced that she did not practise hypnosis. She told me that John was always affected as soon as the table started to move, and that he usually recovered his senses an hour later. Her earlier story that he talked while entranced had been a lie, she admitted, invented to give drama to the adventure.

Just what force was responsible for my friend's assuming this condition is still a puzzle to me. I can only presume that some evil spirit, summoned by means of the table, took that method of placing him completely in the power of the

girl Sulka. If the theory seems grotesque to my readers, I can only suggest that they consult the books of the great Medieval mystics, such as Sprenger and Dom Dominic Schram.

Be that as it may, in about ten minutes our united efforts to revive John Lang were successful. He appeared to have suffered no ill effects, and exhibited naive disappointment when I assured him that he had failed to transmit any messages from the world beyond. With the slightest encouragement, he would have continued the séance. But when the girl declared sullenly that she was sleepy, I seized the opportunity to persuade him to leave with me.

On our way home, I was tempted to tell him what I believed to be the awful truth about Sulka Kopernik. Yet I remained silent. I had no proofs to offer—nothing to go upon, in fact, except the interpretation I now placed on the frenzied words of the medium Susan Thompson, and my astounding personal experience which he would surely misunderstand in the telling.

JOHN sealed my decision by remarking that he was starting in the morning on a business trip, to be absent from New York for a week. He would be safe for at least that length of time, I reflected. Meanwhile, I would think the matter over and confide in him, if necessary, when he returned.

It was not written in the stars, however, that John should make that trip. I heard from him the following day. He called me on the telephone, his voice breaking with anguish, to ask me to help him through the tragedy that had befallen him.

Sulka Kopernik was dead.

She had set out at nine o'clock, it appeared, to walk the few blocks from her home to her office. At the corner of Court and Remsen Streets, passersby had seen her place her hand to her breast, reel and fall to the pavement. She had been carried to the nearest drug store, where a physician pronounced her dead from heart failure. John's card had been found in her pocketbook, and he had been summoned. Since all her living relatives were in Europe, the ordeal of arranging for her funeral would have to be undertaken by him.

At the inquest, it developed that her own doctor had been treating her for acute heart disease. So there was no mystery about her death—no medical or legal mystery, at any rate. For my part, I was haunted by a frightful doubt.

During the preparations for the funeral, I saw the body several times. On one occasion, I went alone into the room where the open coffin stood on its trestles, and stared for several minutes at Sulka Kopernik's face and folded hands. They made a most painful impression upon me. Not because they were ghastly to look at, however. On the contrary, I could scarcely convince myself that the girl was dead.

Her flesh had a natural, healthy glow and her lips were just as red as I had known them in life. The faint tracery of blue veins on the backs of her hands almost seemed to be throbbing. Her eyelids lay so softly over her eyes that I expected them to flutter open at any moment. Her wealth of black hair was absolutely lustrous.

Yet the coroner's official, as well as two private physicians, had certified that a corpse lay here—a dead body that in a few hours, would be buried. Could I set up my judgment against theirs?

No, I could not, and I will tell you why.

I believed Sulka Kopernik to be a vampire, one of those monstrous elemental spirits which seize possession for a while of the bodies of women. In mortal life, they partake of the nature of death; and after they have entered the



tomb, they do not perish utterly—they remain the “undead,” as the medieval occultists called them. At night, they rise and go forth to suck the blood of the living, and so long as they are able to do this, the flesh they inhabit cannot decay, even though buried.

In modern times, of course, the existence of vampires has been denied; they have been classed as myths. But the older students of black magic accepted them without question. And I, too, in this year of grace, 1929, affirm that such things can be.

The body of Sulka was indeed dead, but if a vampire controlled it, its presence in Brooklyn was more dangerous than a pestilence. Sorcerers in the old days believed that there was only one way of destroying a vampire. The body must be interred at a cross-roads, in unconsecrated ground, with a stake driven through its middle. This would cause the evil spirit to flee screaming into outer darkness. But could I, a supposedly rational American citizen, propose such a course in conducting the funeral of John Lang's fiancée?

I simply could not.

**S**HIVERING with the awfulness of my thoughts, I returned to John and did my best to strengthen his morale. He was badly broken up, poor fellow, and needed to hear the conventional words of comfort which I offered him. In due time, we went together to the cemetery as chief mourners. Sulka was buried on a green hillside, according to the rites of the Church, and thus a tragic episode was seemingly ended.

The reader will understand, however, that I could not feel that way about it. If my fears were correct, John and I were likely to become the first victims of the marauding “undead” creature we had laid away. I had a natural impulse to put as great a distance as possible between ourselves and the scene of our contacts with Sulka. If we remained away for a while, I figured, perhaps the spell would be broken. Certainly, for the simple physical reasons of health, John needed a change. So I persuaded him to go with me to the Adirondack Mountains. I arranged for a month's vacation for myself, and the day after the funeral we started north.

We chose a primitive, wooded section in the neighborhood of Indian Lake. At the only hotel in the village, we were told of a log cabin which could be rented cheaply. It was fifteen miles further on, in a valley surrounded by forests. A corduroy road could be followed for half the distance, and then one turned into a narrow trail. Our only neighbors would be occasional roving lumbermen. The isolation appealed to us, and we departed, laden with supplies of food and bedding. The grocer, whose car took us as far as the trail, promised to fill our further orders once a week. From the end of the corduroy road, we made several trips to the cabin, carrying our belongings.

I shall always remember with delight the beauty of that summer retreat in the woods. The valley was thick with pine trees and hemlocks, which created a perpetual green twilight of shade. But there was very little undergrowth, and one could look for hundreds of yards between the ranked colonnades of the tree trunks.

The log cabin was old and covered with an emerald-green moss. It had been built, we were informed, by trappers who had made it their headquarters as far back as the 1880's, when fur-bearing animals were common in that section of the State. No one had lived in it for years, but the wood-dust which lay thickly on the floors and the built-in bunks seemed clean compared with the dirt of cities. We never even troubled to sweep the place out thoroughly.

The charm of the place—the cabin, the dark woods and all—brought peace to my heart, despite the fact that its loneliness and the absence of sunlight undoubtedly gave it a certain eerie character. Memories of Sulka Kopernik were easily banished in that primeval setting. The mere idea that her influence could pursue us to the far woodlands of the Adirondacks appeared ridiculous.

John shared my mood. He shook off his grief and joined me eagerly in fishing expeditions and hikes through the forest. His health improved with extraordinary rapidity. At the end of two weeks, he had lost all traces of the haggard look I had noted on the evening before Sulka's death. His cheeks became tanned, and his eyes grew brighter. I believed him to be a man saved in the nick of time from a subtle inevitable doom.

Our third week passed so tranquilly, so wholesomely, that there is nothing to record concerning it. But on Saturday occurred a change, and every subsequent detail is important, if the reader is to understand what happened.

We expected the grocer at the cross-roads at noon, so we strolled down in leisurely fashion to meet him. He had brought several boxes of canned goods, and it was necessary to make three trips to get them to the cabin. John made light of his share of the work, until we had said good-by to the grocer and started back on our last trip. He then complained that he was tired. Half way, he discarded his load, sat on a stump and insisted that he must rest a while. I noticed that his cheeks were flushed.

Nevertheless, I did not think that anything was seriously wrong, even when, on reaching the cabin, John threw himself on his bunk. I prepared an early supper, for we had dropped into the outdoors habit of going to bed shortly after sunset. My companion tried to eat with me, but he had lost his appetite and complained of a raging headache. He drank a little strong coffee, and then crawled under his blanket, his teeth chattering.

The next day, Sunday, he felt better. I did not like the congested appearance of his face, however, and suggested that I should go to Indian Lake and fetch a doctor. He would have none of it. The worst that could be the matter with him, he insisted, was a touch of indigestion. So we went fishing, and, oddly enough, ran into the first traveler we had seen since our arrival in the valley. This was a lumberjack named Stephenson, on his way to a logging camp many miles to the northward where he hoped to find work.

Stephenson gave us a hearty greeting and threw himself on the ground beside the rill in which we were rather aimlessly angling with home-made rods. He talked about the weather and the scarcity of fish, but all the while he was speaking he stared more and more intently at John.

“Boy, you're sick,” he interrupted himself to remark. “You've got a high fever—or else I'm crazy!”

I swung around, and was shocked at my friend's appearance. He had suddenly grown far worse than he had been the day before. The veins on his neck and forehead were swollen. He was teetering on his heels, and seemed about to fall. The lumberjack seized his wrist with rough kindness and felt his pulse.

“God, it's beating like mad!” he said. “We'd better take this lad over to your shack and put him to bed.”

**J**OHNSON did not utter a word, and as we both put our arms about him he collapsed against us. We were forced to carry him for more than a mile, to reach the log cabin. When we finally got him undressed and covered with all the blankets available, he was babbling in delirium.

“It's what we call woods fever. It comes from drinking bad water,” declared Stephenson.

But this diagnosis was too vague to be helpful and too primitive to dispel my fears.

“I've got to get a doctor for him. The nearest one is at Indian Lake. Fifteen miles of bad road—and I'll have to walk the whole way!” I cried, a bit hysterically. “Will you look after him while I'm gone?”

“I wouldn't know how. I'm not accustomed to nursing folks,” answered Stephenson. “But I'd make better time to town than you would. Let me fetch the doctor.”

“That's darned good of you.”

“Forget it. I'll go—and glad to do it, Brother. But it's late in the day already. There isn't much chance of my

finding the doc' and bringing him here before tomorrow morning. S'long, and good luck!"

It was then around six o'clock in the evening, and due to our location among the trees at the valley bottom, the darkness of night was upon us. I made John drink a mild and harmless sedative, and was presently relieved to note that it had taken effect. He fell off into a light sleep. His face was still abnormally red and he breathed with difficulty, but otherwise there were no symptoms to alarm me particularly.

I cannot excuse myself for failing to remain awake all night. It had been my firm intention to do so, not knowing when the opiate might wear off and more stringent treatment become necessary. But I was young, and my recent outdoor life made it pretty hard for me to keep my eyes open. Shortly before midnight, I felt overwhelmingly tired, and I yielded to the temptation to lie down, fully dressed, in my own bunk. I must have gone to sleep immediately.

I RETURNED to consciousness abruptly, two hours later, as though I had been summoned by some force outside myself. It was a curious phenomenon. Instead of the usual transition between slumber and wakefulness, I was wide awake in an instant and lay with unblinking eyelids, all my senses acutely attuned to detect whatever had startled me in the darkness. For a brief moment, I wondered. And then I knew. John and I were not alone. *A third presence was in the room.*

I am almost tempted to write, a "third person" was in the room." For, although I had seen nothing, and only felt the nearness of a mysterious being, it did not suggest a ghost to me. The presence seemed more concrete, more terrifying and ghastly, than any specter. I burst into a cold perspiration and shook with fear. Most people have had the similar experience of waking up at night and feeling sure that a burglar was in the house. But this was something worse than a crude robber with a gun. Instinctively certain that no one had come to steal from us, I quailed under a menace which defied analysis.

Very slowly, I raised myself on my elbow and strained my eyes to pierce the gloom. At first it was too black for me to distinguish anything except the outline of the window at the foot of John's bunk. Finally I thought I could make out a shifting mass of darkness. I blinked my eyes. Surely it must have been a trick of the imagination! Then I heard the faint sound of panting, and ascribed it desperately to John's feverish breathing. Oh, how I wanted to let it go at that, and bury my head under the covers like a frightened child! While I was still struggling with myself, a woman laughed softly, gloatingly, a short arm's length away.

I cut loose then with a shout of horror. Overcoming the numbness in my legs, I tumbled from the bunk. There was the sound of swishing garments, and light but definite footfalls pattered on the dirt floor. The silhouette of a head passed swiftly across the window. Its identity was unmistakable, for the huge blur of fluffed-out hair merely confirmed my suspicions. Appalling and unbelievable as it may seem, Sulka Kopernik was in that room.

She ran to the door and opened it with hands of flesh and bone—hands that I had seen buried in a Brooklyn cemetery. I would rather have taken poison than have attempted to seize her. But after she had gone, I followed and stared through the doorway. For a few minutes, I could make out her figure running between the tall trunks of the pines. Then she disappeared.

Too stunned even to be agast any longer, I turned back into the cabin and lighted an oil lamp. I don't know what I expected to find, but I was certainly unprepared for the happy surprise that awaited me. John was lying peacefully on his bunk, his eyes open and a smile on his lips. He appeared to be rather weak, but the fever had subsided.

"What's the matter, Hugh?" I thought I heard you yell, and it woke me. Did you have a nightmare?"

"Yes. Did you?" I retorted cryptically.

"I guess I did. A funny dream, anyway. But I don't recall what it was about, and I'm feeling fine."

I placed a fingertip on his pulse. The beat was quite regular. Then, as he sighed and shifted the position of his head on the pillow, I observed two small punctures in his neck—the mark of the vampire who had been interrupted at her feast.

Perhaps I might have questioned him further about his impressions, but he fell asleep peacefully before I was able to speak. My rôle for the balance of the night was that of a shuddering watcher, who dreaded a second visit from the unknown.

Early in the morning, the lumberjack returned from Indian Lake with a Dr. Hiram Aldis. The latter made a careful examination of John, and showed special interest in the marks on his neck.

"He has had a touch of enteric fever, complicated by his constitutional tendency toward high blood pressure," the doctor announced at last. "Dye know, this is the sort of case that used to be relieved in the early days of medical practise by artificial bleeding. We have better methods now, but our great-grandfathers believed firmly in blood-letting. I'm not so sure but what this gentleman would have died last night if you hadn't applied leeches to him."

"Leeches!" I cried, astounded. "The little water slugs that physicians in the Middle Ages employed to suck blood from their patients?"

"Certainly. And they're still used in some countries," replied Dr. Aldis. He stared again at John's neck. "I'd say that these punctures were made by leeches. Weren't they applied intentionally?"

"I had no leeches," I muttered.

The doctor shrugged his shoulders. "They inhabit these damp woods. Possibly, a couple of them crawled in here, though I never before heard of their doing such a thing."

"It sounds unlikely to me," said John feebly. "Besides, I found marks on my neck every once in a while, back home in Brooklyn!"

"Those marks may have been scratches, made by your own fingernails," retorted the doctor, smiling skeptically. "But on this occasion blood was drawn from your veins, and it just about saved your life, young fellow. You'll recover quickly now."

HE was neither a very scientific nor a very inquisitive doctor, for he allowed the matter to go at that. I listened to him mutely, while cold chills crinkled the skin between my shoulder blades. For I knew better. Those punctures had been made by Sulka Kopernik, with her little pointed teeth! Before she had gone to the grave, she had played the vampire at her amateur séances with John; and last night she had come back to do the same thing.

But a startling theory was now formulating itself in my mind. Could it be that her purpose in returning had been to help him? She had told me that her love for John had been sincere. Perhaps in the world beyond, she had resolved to use her awful powers only for good where he was concerned.

When John had recovered his health, I discussed the problem with him, holding back no detail of what I believed about Sulka herself, living or dead, and the events I had witnessed that night in the cabin. I'll admit frankly that he scoffed at my whole testimony, dismissing it as "preposterous." He could not accept the reality of vampires, and agreed with Dr. Aldis that he must have been bitten by a leech. But John's knowledge of the occult is superficial, and since he is happy in his ignorance, it is just as well that he should remain so.

I can do no more than affirm that we have neither of us been visited again by the vampire, Sulka Kopernik. Whether she has molested other persons, I cannot say. If there is any evidence which points in that direction, I would like to hear about it, so that I may study it in the interests of science.

Did Clayton "catch"  
a poor, weak phantom—a creature  
that couldn't resist  
telling the secrets of the  
spirit world? He claimed he did—  
but ghastly events followed  
when he tried to  
PROVE his incredible  
tale of

# The Inexperienced GHOST

THE scene amidst which Clayton told his last story comes back very vividly to my mind. There he sat for the greater part of the time, in the corner of the authentic settle by the spacious open fire, and Sanderson sat beside him smoking the Broseley clay that bore his name. There was Evans, and that marvel among actors, Wish, who is also a modest man. We had all come down to the Mermaid Club that Saturday morning, except Clayton, who had slept there overnight—which indeed gave him the opening of his story. We had golfed until golfing was invisible; we had dined, and we were in that mood of tranquil kindliness when men will suffer a story. When Clayton began to tell one, we naturally supposed he was lying. It may be that indeed he *was* lying—of that the reader will speedily be able to judge as well as I. He began, it is true, with an air of matter-of-fact anecdote, but that we thought was only the incurable artifice of the man.

"I say!" he remarked, after a long consideration of the upward rain of sparks from the log that Sanderson had thumped, "you know I was alone here last night?"

"Except for the domestics," said Wish.

"Who sleep in the other wing," said Clayton. "Yes. Well——" He pulled at his cigar for some little time as though he still hesitated about his confidence. Then he said, quite quietly, "I caught a ghost!"



"What are you doing here?" I snapped. "Are you a member of this club?"

"Caught a ghost, did you?" said Sanderson. "Where is it?"

And Evans, who admires Clayton immensely and has spent four weeks in America, shouted, "Caught a ghost, did you, Clayton? I'm glad of it! Tell us all about it right now."

Clayton said he would in a minute, and asked him to shut the door.

He looked apologetically at me. "There's no danger of eavesdropping of course, but we don't want to upset our very excellent service with any rumors of ghosts in the place. There's too much shadow and oak paneling to trifle with that. And this, you know, wasn't a regular ghost. I don't think it will come again—ever."



"Boo!" he said. . . . "I'm a ghost!"

"You mean to say you didn't keep it?" said Sanderson.

"I hadn't the heart to," said Clayton.

And Sanderson said he was surprised.

We laughed, and Clayton look aggrieved. "I know," he said, with the flicker of a smile, "but the fact is it really *was* a ghost, and I'm as sure of it as I am that I am talking to you now. I'm not joking. I mean what I say."

SANDERSON drew deeply at his pipe, with one reddish eye on Clayton, and then emitted a thin jet of smoke more eloquent than many words.

Clayton ignored the comment. "It is the strangest thing that has ever happened in my life. You know I never believed in ghosts or anything of the sort, before, ever—and

## By H. G. WELLS

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The Outline of History,  
The King Who Was a King,  
etc.

then, you know, I bag one in a corner; and the whole business is in my hands."

He meditated still more profoundly and produced and began to pierce a second cigar with a curious little stabber he affected.

"You talked to it?" asked Wish.

"For the space, probably, of an hour."

"Chatty?" I said, joining the party of the skeptics.

"The poor devil was in trouble," said Clayton, bowed over his cigar-end, and with the very faintest note of reproof.

"Sobbing?" someone asked.

Clayton heaved a realistic sigh at the memory. "Good Lord!" he said, "yes." And then, "Poor fellow! yes."

"Where did you strike it?" asked Evans, in his best American accent.

"I NEVER realized," said Clayton, ignoring him, "the poor sort of thing a ghost might be," and he hung us up again for a time, while he sought for matches in his pocket and lit and warmed to his cigar.

"I took an advantage," he reflected at last.

We were none of us in a hurry. "A character," he said, "remains just the same character, for all that it's been disembodied. That's a thing we too often forget. People with a certain strength or fixity of purpose may have ghosts of a certain strength and fixity of

purpose—most haunting ghosts, you know, must be as one-idea'd as monomaniacs and as obstinate as mules to come back again and again. This poor creature wasn't." He suddenly looked up rather queerly, and his eye went round the room. "I say it," he said, "in all kindness, but that is the plain truth of the case. Even at the first glance he struck me as weak."

He punctuated with the help of his cigar.

"I came upon him, you know, in the long passage. His back was toward me and I saw him first. Right off I knew him for a ghost. He was transparent and whitish; clean through his chest I could see the glimmer of the little window at the end of the corridor. And not only his physique but his attitude struck me as being weak. He

looked, you know, as though he didn't know in the slightest whatever he meant to do. One hand was on the paneling and the other fluttered to his mouth. Like—*so!*"

"What sort of physique?" said Sanderson.

"Lean. You know that sort of young man's neck that has two great flutings down the back, here and here—*so!* And a little, meanish head with scrubby hair and rather bad ears. Shoulders bad, narrower than the hips; turndown collar, ready-made short jacket, trousers baggy and a little frayed at the heels. That's how he took me. I came very quietly up the staircase. I did not carry a light, you know—the candles are on the landing table, and there is that lamp—and I was in my list slippers, and I saw him as I came up. I stopped dead at that—taking him in. I wasn't a bit afraid. I think that in most of these affairs one is never nearly so afraid or excited as one imagines one would be. I was surprised and interested. I thought, 'Good Lord! Here's a ghost at last! And I haven't believed for a moment in ghosts during the last five-and-twenty years!'"

"Um," said Wish.

"I suppose I wasn't on the landing a moment before he found out I was there. He turned on me sharply, and I saw the face of an immature young man, a weak nose, a scrubby little mustache, a feeble chin. So for an instant we stood—he looking over his shoulder at me—and regarded one another. Then he seemed to remember his high calling. He turned round, drew himself up, projected his face, raised his arms, spread his hands in approved ghost fashion—and came toward me. As he did so his little jaw dropped, and he emitted a faint, drawn-out 'Boo.' No, it wasn't—not a bit dreadful. I'd dined. I'd had a bottle of champagne, and, being all alone, perhaps two or three—perhaps even four or five—whiskies, so I was as solid as rocks and no more frightened than if I'd been assailed by a frog.

"'Boo—nonsense! What are you doing here?' I snapped. 'Are you a member of this club?'"

"I could see him wince. 'Boo—oo,' he said.

"'Boo—be hanged! You don't belong to this place,' I said. And just to show I didn't care a pin for him I stepped through a corner of him and made to light my candle. 'Are you, or are you not, a member?' I repeated, looking at him sideways.

"He moved a little so as to stand clear of me, and his bearing became crestfallen. 'No,' he said, in answer to the persistent interrogation of my eye; 'I'm not a member—I'm a ghost.'"

"WELL, that doesn't give you the run of the Mermaid Club. Is there anyone you want to see, or anything of that sort?" And doing it as steadily as possible for fear that he should mistake the carelessness of whisky for the distraction of fear, I got my candle alight. I turned on him holding it. 'What are you doing here?' I said.

"He had dropped his hands and stopped his booing, and there he stood, abashed and awkward, the ghost of a weak, silly, aimless young man. 'I'm haunting,' he said.

"'You haven't any business to,' I said in a quiet voice.

"'I'm a ghost,' he said, as if in self-defence.

"That may be, but you haven't any business to haunt here. This is a respectable club; people often stop here with nursemaids and children, and, going about in the careless way you do, some poor little mite could easily come upon you and be scared out of her wits. I suppose you didn't think of that?"

"'No, sir,' he said, 'I didn't.'"

"'You should have. You haven't any claim on the place,

have you? Weren't murdered here, or anything of that sort?"

"None, sir; but I thought as it was old and oak-paneled—"

"That's *no* excuse,' I regarded him firmly. 'Your coming here is a mistake,' I said, in a tone of friendly superiority. I feigned to see if I had my matches, and then looked up at him frankly. 'If I were you I wouldn't wait for cock-crow—I'd vanish right away.'"

"He looked embarrassed. 'The fact is sir—' he began.

"'I'd vanish,' I said, driving it home.

"The fact is, sir, that—somehow—I can't.'"

"You can't?"

"NO, sir. There's something I've forgotten. I've been hanging about here since midnight last night, hiding in the cupboards of the empty bedrooms and things like that. I'm flurried. I've never come haunting before, and it seems to put me out.'"

"Put you out?"

"Yes, sir. I've tried to do it several times, and it doesn't come off. There's some little thing has slipped me, and I can't get back.'"

"That, you know, rather bowled me over. He looked at me in such an abject way that for the life of me I couldn't keep up quite the high hectoring tone I had adopted.

"That's queer,' I said, and as I spoke I fancied I heard someone moving about down below. 'Come into my room and tell me more about it,' I said. 'I don't, of course, understand this,' and I tried to take him by the arm. But, of course, you might as well have tried to take hold of a puff of smoke! I had forgotten my number, I think; anyhow, I remember going into several bedrooms—it was lucky I was the only soul in that wing—until I saw my traps.

"Here we are,' I said, and sat down in the armchair. 'Sit down and tell me all about it. It seems to me you have got yourself into a jolly awkward position, old chap.'"

"Well, he said he wouldn't sit down; he'd prefer to flit up and down the room if it was all the same to me. And so he did, and in a little while we were deep in a long and serious talk. And presently, you know, something of those whiskies and sodas evaporated out of me, and I began to realize just a little what a thundering rum and weird business it was that I was in. There he was, semi-transparent—the proper conventional phantom, and noiseless except for his ghost of a voice—flitting to and fro in that nice, clean chintz-hung old bedroom. You could see the gleam of the copper candlesticks through him, and the lights on the brass fender, and the corners of the framed engraving on the wall, and there he was telling me all about this wretched little life of his that had recently ended on earth. He hadn't a particularly honest face, you know, but being transparent, of course, he couldn't avoid telling the truth."

"Eh?" said Wish, suddenly sitting up in his chair.

"What?" said Clayton.

"Being transparent—couldn't avoid telling the truth—I don't see it," said Wish.

"I don't see it," said Clayton, with inimitable assurance. "But it *is* so, I can assure you nevertheless. I don't believe he once got a nail's breadth off the Bible truth. He told me how he had been killed—he went down into a London basement with a candle to look for a leakage of gas—and described himself as a senior English master in a London private school when that release occurred."

"Poor wretch!" said I.

"That's what I thought, and the more he talked the more





I thought it. There he was, purposeless in life and purposeless out of it. He talked of his father and mother and his schoolmaster, and all who had ever been anything to him in the world, meanly. He had been too sensitive, too nervous; none of them had ever valued him properly or understood him, he said. He had never had a real friend in the world, I think; he had never had a success. He had shirked games and failed examinations. 'It's like this with some people,' he said. 'Whenever I got into the examination-room or anywhere, everything seemed to go.' Engaged to be married, of course—to another over-sensitive person, I suppose—when the indiscretion with the gas escape ended his affairs.

"And where are you now?" I asked. 'Not in——?'

"He wasn't clear on that point at all. The impression he gave me was of a sort of vague, intermediate state, a special reserve for souls too non-existent for anything so positive as either sin or virtue. I don't know. He was much too egotistical and unobtrusive to give me any clear idea of the kind of place, kind of country, there is on the Other Side of Things. Wherever he was, he seemed to have fallen in with a set of kindred spirits: ghosts of weak Cockney young men, who were on a footing of Christian names, and among these there was certainly a lot of talk about 'going haunting' and things like that. Yes—going haunting! They seemed to think 'haunting' a tremendous adventure, and most of them funked it all the time. And so primed, you know, he had come."

"But really!" said Wish to the fire.

"These are the impressions he gave me, anyhow," said Clayton, modestly. "I may, of course, have been in a rather uncritical state, but that was the sort of background he gave to himself. He kept flitting up and down, with his thin voice going—talking, talking about his wretched self, and never a word of clear, firm statement from first to last. He was thinner and sillier and more pointless than if he had been real and alive. Only then, you know, he would not have been in my bedroom here—if he *had* been alive. I should have kicked him out."

"Of course," said Evans, "there *are* poor mortals like that."

"And there's just as much chance of their having ghosts as the rest of us," I admitted.

"WHAT gave a sort of point to him, you know, was the fact that he did seem to me, nobody, not found himself out. The mess he had made of haunting had depressed him terribly. He had been told it would be a 'lark'; he had come expecting it to be a 'lark,' and here it was, nothing but another failure added to his record! He proclaimed himself an utter out-and-out failure. He said, and I can quite believe it, that he had never tried to do anything all his life that he hadn't made a perfect mess of—and through all the wastes of eternity he never would. If he had had sympathy, perhaps. . . ."

"He paused at that, and stood regarding me. He remarked that, strange as it might seem to me, nobody, not anyone, ever, had given him the amount of sympathy I was doing now. I could see what he wanted straight away, and I determined to head him off at once. I may be a brute, you know, but being the Only Real Friend, the recipient of the confidences of one of these egotistical weaklings, ghost or body, is beyond my physical endurance. I got up briskly. 'Don't you brood on these things too much,' I said. 'The thing you've got to do is to get out of this—get out of this sharp. You pull yourself together and try.'"

"I can't," he said.

"You try," I said, and try he did."

"Try!" said Sanderson. "How?"

"Passes," said Clayton.

"Passes?"

"Complicated series of gestures and passes with the hands.

That's how he had come in and that's how he had to get out again. Lord! what a business I had!"

"But how could any series of passes—" I began.

"My dear man," said Clayton, turning on me and putting a great emphasis on certain words, "you want *everything* clear. I don't know *how*. All I know is that you *do*—that he did, anyhow, at least. After a fearful time, you know, he got his passes right and suddenly disappeared."

"Did you," said Sanderson slowly, "observe the passes?"

"Yes," said Clayton, and seemed to think. "It was tremendously queer," he said. "There we were, I and this thin vague ghost, in that silent room, in this silent, empty inn, in this silent little Friday-night town. Not a sound except our voices and a faint panting he made when he swung. There was the bedroom candle, and one candle on the dressing-table alight, that was all—sometimes one or the other would flare up into a tall, lean, astonished flame for a space. And queer things happened."

"I can't," he said. "I shall never——!" And suddenly he sat down on a little chair at the foot of the bed and began to sob and sob. Lord! what a harrowing, whimpering thing he seemed!

"YOU pull yourself together," I said, and tried to pat him on the back, and—my confounded hand went through him! By that time, you know, I wasn't nearly so—so massive as I had been on the landing. I got the queerness of it full. I remember snatching back my hand out of him, as it were, with a little thrill, and walking over to the dressing-table."

"You pull yourself together," I said to him 'and try.' And in order to encourage and help him I began to try as well."

"What!" said Sanderson, "the passes?"

"Yes, the passes."

"But—" I said, moved by an idea that eluded me for a space.

"This is interesting," said Sanderson, with his finger in his pipe-bowl. "You mean to say this ghost of yours gave away—"

"Did his level best to give away the whole confounded barrier? *Yes!*"

"He didn't," said Wish. "He couldn't. Or you'd have gone there too."

"That's precisely it," I said, finding my elusive idea put into words for me.

"That is precisely it," agreed Clayton, with thoughtful eyes upon the fire.

For just a little while there was silence.

"And at last he did it?" said Sanderson.

"At last he did it. I had to keep up to it hard, but he did it at last—rather suddenly. He despaired, we had a scene, and then he got up abruptly and asked me to go through the whole performance, slowly, so that he might see. 'I believe,' he said, 'if I could see I should spot what was wrong at once.'"

And he did.

"I know," he said.

"What do you know?" said I.

"I know," he repeated. Then he said, peevishly. 'I *can't* do it, if you look at me! I really *can't*; it's been that, partly, all along. I'm such a nervous fellow that you put me out.'"

"Well, we had a bit of an argument. Naturally, I wanted to see; but he was as obstinate as a mule, and suddenly I had come over as tired as a dog—he tired me out. 'All right,' I said, 'I won't look at you,' and turned towards the mirror on the wardrobe by the bed."

"He started off very fast. I tried to follow him by looking in the looking-glass, to see just what it was he hadn't been able to do. Round went his arms and his hands, so, and so, and so, and then with a rush he came to the last gesture of

all—you stand erect and open out your arms—and so, don't you know, he stood. And then he didn't! He didn't! *He wasn't!* I wheeled round from the looking-glass to him. There was nothing! I was alone, with the flaring candles and a staggering mind. What had happened? Had anything happened? Had I been dreaming? . . . And then, with an absurd note of finality about it, the clock upon the landing discovered the moment was ripe for striking *one*. So!—ping! And I was as grave and sober as a judge, with all my champagne and whisky gone into the vast serene. Feeling queer, you know—confoundingly *queer!* Queer! . . . Good Lord!"

He regarded his cigar-ash for a moment. "That's all that happened," he said.

"And then you went to bed?" asked Evans.

"What else was there to do?"

I looked Wish in the eye. We wanted to scoff, but there was something, something perhaps in Clayton's voice and manner, that hampered our desire.

"And about these passes?" said Sanderson.

"I believe I could do them now."

"Oh!" said Sanderson, and produced a pen-knife and set himself to grub the dottle out of the bowl of his clay.

"Why don't you do them now?" said Sanderson, shutting his pen-knife with a click.

"**THAT'S** what I'm going to do," said Clayton.

"They won't work," said Evans.

"If they do—" I suggested.

"You know, I'd rather you didn't," said Wish, stretching out his legs.

"Why?" asked Evans.

"I'd rather he didn't," said Wish.

"But he hasn't got 'em right," said Sanderson, plugging too much tobacco into his pipe.

"All the same, I'd rather he didn't," said Wish.

We argued with Wish. He said that for Clayton to go through those gestures was like mocking a serious matter.

"But you don't believe—" I said.

Wish glanced at Clayton, who was staring into the fire, weighing something in his mind. "I do—more than half, anyhow, I do," said Wish.

"Clayton," said I, "you're too good a liar for us. Most of it was all right. But that disappearance . . . happened to be convincing. Tell us it's a tale of cock and bull."

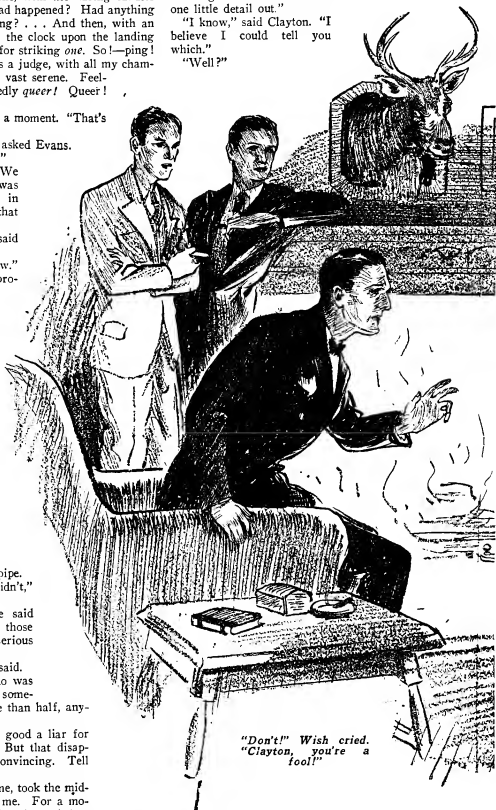
He stood up without heeding me, took the middle of the hearthrug, and faced me. For a moment he regarded his feet thoughtfully, and then for all the rest of the time his eyes were on the opposite wall, with an intent expression. He raised his two hands slowly to the level of his eyes and so began. . . .

Now, Sanderson is a Freemason, a member of the lodge of the Four Kings, which devotes itself so ably to the study and elucidation of all the mysteries of Masonry, past and present; and among the students of this Lodge, Sanderson is by no means the least. He followed Clayton's motions

very closely, with a singular interest in his reddish eye. "That's not bad," he said, when it was done. "You really do, you know, put things together, Clayton, in a most amazing fashion. But there's one little detail out."

"I know," said Clayton. "I believe I could tell you which."

"Well?"



"Don't!" Wish cried. "Clayton, you're a fool!"

"This," said Clayton, and did a queer little twist and writhing and thrust of the hands.

"Yes."

"That, you know, was what *he* couldn't get right," said Clayton. "But how do *you*—?"

"Most of this business, and particularly how you invented it, I don't understand at all," said Sanderson, "but just that phase—I do." He reflected. "These happen

to be a series of gestures—connected with a certain branch of esoteric Masonry—as probably you know. Or else—*how?*” He reflected still further “I don’t see that I can do any harm in telling you just the proper twist. After all, if you know, you know; if you don’t, you don’t.”

“I know nothing,” said Clayton, “except what the poor devil let out last night.”

“Well, anyhow,” said Sanderson, and placed his church-

He stood up before the waning fire and smiled at us all. But I think there was just a little hesitation in his smile. “If I begin—” he said.

“I wouldn’t begin,” said Wish.

“It’s all right!” said Evans. “Matter is indestructible. You don’t think any jiggery-pokery of this sort is going to snatch Clayton into the world of shades. Not it! You may try, Clayton, so far as I’m concerned, until your arms drop off at the wrists.”

“I don’t believe that,” said Wish, and stood up and put his arm on Clayton’s shoulder. “You’ve made me half believe in that story somehow, and I don’t want to see the thing done.”

“Goodness!” said I, “here’s Wish frightened!”

“I am,” said Wish, with real or admirably feigned intensity. “I believe that if he goes through these motions right he’ll go.”

“He’ll not do anything of the sort!” I cried. “There’s only one way out of this world for men, and Clayton is thirty years from that. Besides. . . And such a ghost! Do you think—?”

Wish interrupted me by moving. He started to his feet.

“Don’t!” Wish cried. “Clayton, you’re a fool!”

Clayton, with a humorous light in his eyes, smiled back at him.

“Wish,” he said, “is right and all you others are wrong. I shall go. I shall get to the end of these passes, and as the last swish whistles through the air, *Presto!*—this hearthrug will be vacant, the room will be blank amazement, and a respectably dressed gentleman will plump into the world of shades. I’m certain. So will you be. I decline to argue further. Let the thing be tried.”

“No,” said Wish. He made a step and ceased, and Clayton raised his arms once more to repeat the spirit’s passing.

**B**Y that time, you know, we were all in a state of tension—largely because of the behavior of Wish. We remained, all of us, with our eyes on Clayton—I, at least, with a sort of tight, stiff feeling about me as though from the back of my skull to the middle of my thighs my body had been changed to steel. And there, with a gravity that was imperturbably serene, Clayton bowed and swayed and waved his hands and arms before us. As he drew towards the end, one piled up, one tingled in one’s teeth. The last gesture, I have said, was to swing the arms out wide open, with the face held up. And when at last he swung out to this closing gesture I ceased even to breathe. It was ridiculous, of course, but you know that ghost-story feeding. It was after dinner, (Continued on page 91)



Clayton raised his arms once more to repeat the spirit's passing

warden very carefully upon the shelf over the fireplace. Then very rapidly he gesticulated with his hands.

“So?” said Clayton, repeating.

“So,” said Sanderson, and took his pipe in hand again.

“Ah, now,” said Clayton, “I can do the whole thing—right.”

# A CLOUD of

*Is murder  
ever justified?  
Annie Crehan  
killed—to save  
the only thing  
that loved her.*

*Read  
how the  
Other World  
played an  
astounding part  
at  
her trial*

**T**HERE was something about the prisoner, Annie Crehan, which baffled the Judge. It was as though some secret, some unexpected and inexplicable goodness lay behind the somber mask of her crime. But it was a mere suggestion, some silent, psychological force that made itself evident without sound or form. All afternoon Judge Carew had been watching her furtively; puzzled, worried, unwilling to inflict ultimate, painful judgment where ultimate, painful judgment was demanded.

The heat in the courtroom was intense. The air seemed a tangible thing—a curtain of murkiness and suffocation that might be pushed back with the hands. Flies droned against the bare, yellow walls, upon which hung spotted portraits of past dignitaries of the country's justice. The faded eyes in the pictures seemed to watch. . . .

The jury wore a sullen look—a look almost menacing. The crowded room seethed with restless, sweating, acrid humanity. In the tense faces dwelt a fierce thirst of hate. Their eyes leered with a morbid vengeance as they settled on the prisoner at the bar. Their fingers clenched now and again as though they longed to take punishment out of the hands of the law and into their own.

The Judge was a firm, gray-faced statue, the lines of whose naturally kind mouth, between the thick gray mustaches, had



*I hit him on the head  
with a brass kettle. . . .  
I only meant to stun  
him*

deepened and hardened to granite through his years of knowledge and judgment of other men's sins. He was aware, suddenly, of an almost subconscious wish to stay the mob's cruelty.

There was something about the woman that belied everything that had been said against her—something appealing, intangible. . . .

The Judge looked down at her.

**T**HE prisoner was the one quiet figure in the room. Her whole attitude was one of apathy. Perhaps, thought Judge Carew, she had passed beyond thought and feeling. She sat motionless, her thin hands hanging loosely against her coarse black dress, her face expressionless. Hers was the primitive,

# WITNESSES

By  
FRANCIS  
GILBERT



*He just lay there, not moving. His face frightened me*

and unselfishly wrought, at some unguessed time. Behind the weariness of them, their haggard pain, lived an inner, eternal light. Again Judge Carew was seized with the longing to deal sentence less harshly upon this criminal than the enormity of her crime seemed to make necessary. He had a weird, swift feeling that she was fenced about on all sides by a protecting throng of invisible presences. . . .

The trial wore on. Witness after witness was sworn to the stand and heard. The evidence was damning. There was no mercy in it. All the forces at work were forces

of condemnation. It seemed a fixed certainty that before Annie Crehan yawned a black gulf of punishment—final, irrevocable, horrible. She was a murderess.

Buck Crehan, her brother, had been seen to stagger, laughing drunkenly, into her presence at five in the afternoon. An hour later he had been found lying dead in her room, a hideous, jagged wound across his head. Annie Crehan had not confessed, but neither had she denied. She remained always the same—mute, stunned, careless of her fate, a hard little smile touching the corners of her lips, as though she mocked death itself. It was impossible to tell anything definite from her face or her attitude. They were entirely noncommittal. They might mean everything—or nothing.

STILL tense, feverish, malignant, the court finally adjourned until the morrow. And—contrary to precedent—Judge Carew came to stand beside the woman whom he expected presently to be forced to condemn to a shameful death. He began to speak harshly to her because—as he was sure she would immediately divine—custom had taught him that was the way to conquer any trace of personal feeling. "The evidence is all against you," he said briefly, and public opinion runs high. But just for a moment during

stoic calm of the savage who, having asked no quarter, expects none.

As a younger woman, she must have been refined, he decided, with possibilities even of beauty. The features of her face were regular still, but the skin was sallow and coarse, the mouth hard. Below the eyes were the dark, sagging pockets of flesh that vice and misery weave, while the rest of the face was deeply lined. The Judge, with his shrewd understanding of humanity, could read the whole sordid story in those lines. There were seams of drink, of drugs, of manifold petty crimes, and their attendant shames and defiance. The black, badly-done hair had the same faded weariness about it that characterized her general appearance. But her eyes—

Judge Carew looked again at the eyes, and yet again. Dark they were, and long-lashed, with a shadow like a smudge of soot beneath them; not vicious eyes, nor despairing. And they were filled, even as are the eyes of the very noble, with the memory of gentle courtesies and gracious deeds, silently

the trial today it occurred to me to wonder if you were ready to die?"

She smiled up at him, weary, dispassionate; then she spoke:

"I am not afraid to, I think. But why should you wonder about it, Your Honor? You know my reputation. The very way people speak my name is a brand. I'm considered vile."

He caught her by surprise with his answer: "But you were not always considered vile."

For an instant she was startled from her habitual lethargy. "No, I . . . oh, no! That is, of course—no one is. But if you once begin crime—if you make a mistake, and Society gets its heel on your throat. . . . Well, after that. . . ."

Her unuttered words spoke volumes. They moved the man of the courts, grown gray and wearily wise in their service. His voice softened. The woman had pierced the surface of his usually veiled personality.

"Tell me about the beginning," he commanded. "There's a sort of indefinable good, under your apparent badness, which makes me deplore your condemnation."

She looked at him sharply. "You mean you feel I'm being watched over somehow—by invisible guardians—isn't that it?"

He nodded. "Possibly—if you choose to put it that way. Doubtless it's some trick of your power of mind. Some mentalities, in extremity, can rise to extraordinary heights. Now, answer my question."

"It goes back a long while," she began hesitantly, "through a good many years—that first turning point. I struck a woman—an influential woman of the community. Struck her hard, so that her face was scarred afterward. She was abusing a cat, horribly. To investigate its habits, she said. No one would interfere but me. I lost control of myself. I could never endure the sight of dumb suffering. So I hit out at her. That was the beginning. She had me arrested. I had no proper defense against one in her position. I was sent up."

"And then?" the judge urged tactfully. There was just a chance that, in talking about herself like this, the woman might in some way reveal the key to the goodness he felt lay concealed in her soul.

"When I got out I tried to get work. But it was the old story. Every one was afraid to hire me. Thought I was a loose woman, I suppose. Then I got sick. The dampness in the cells brings that—bad lungs. Had to have food and medicine. I began to steal for them. I got caught. And there was my other jail record behind me. I went over the road again."

She shuddered and went on: "When I'd done my time I came back to find I was in the dregs. Then I began to take drugs, to drink—anything so's not to remember. Then Buck got hold of me. He was in the gutter by that time. You know the rest. More crime. And now. . . ."

Her voice trailed monotonously away. Judge Carew shook his head. The clue he sought had not been unearthed. And yet. . . . Suddenly, against all judicial precedent, he leaned forward, compelling her with his shrewd eyes.

"But why did you kill Crehan?"

Her voice was instantly wary. "It hasn't been proved that I did."

"But it will be proved."

"I'll wait for that time."

Her tone was matter-of-fact. He looked at her incredulously.

"See here," he asked in a low, strained voice, "if you've no fear of the court or death, isn't there at least enough decency left in you to make you fear some sort of higher power? Don't you believe in *something*?"

Her eyelids twitched. "I believe in Life," she answered. The Judge stared.

"Life! Just what do you mean by that?"

She shrugged her wasted shoulders as if at the futility of words.

"Sometime you'll know that for yourself. I think every one does—even if it's at the very last. It's the one thing—Life."

"And yet—you killed Crehan."

Her mouth sagged. She leaned back on the prisoner's bench and looked up directly into his probing eyes. It was almost as though she were suddenly at peace. Not a muscle of her face moved. Her voice came evenly.

"But I didn't mean to. Not that anyone will believe that, least of all a judge. I wouldn't expect it. I hit him on the head with a brass kettle—the edge of it. A heavy thing. The first thing I could reach. I only meant to stun him. But he just lay there, not moving. His face frightened me. He was drunk that night—and I couldn't stand his hurting Tan so. The little fellow was suffering with a broken leg. And he was the only thing that loved me. And when Buck struck him like that, and twisted him, and he gave that awful cry—"

Moaning, she hid her face with shaking hands.

"Tan? Who's Tan?"

Here, at last, was a light in the vast darkness surrounding the prisoner.

"My dog."

And Annie Crehan crumpled up like a stricken thing. The terrible sound of her crying echoed through the empty courtroom—the crying of a hardened woman, to whom tears have long been foreign.

She looked up at last, her face haggard.

"I'm glad I've spoken," she said. "It's a sort of relief, after all. I didn't mean to kill. The people in our street could have told you things. I only wanted to save Tan. And I think somehow, somewhere, Buck knows I didn't mean to do what I did. He knows—"

"You think that? You believe in immortality, then?"

"I believe in Life," she repeated. "You can kill flesh or minds, or even souls perhaps. But not Life. Life can't be killed."

Judge Carew moved uneasily.

"I am not sure that I understand."

"No. Probably not. But sometime you will. Everyone does. What are you going to do now? Tell them tonight? I almost wish you would. I want to have it over. Death will be easier than waiting. Will they electrocute me right off? Or what?"

He shook his head.

"No," he replied quite unexpectedly. "Yours is an unusual confession—outside the ordinary court precedents. I'm going to see what sort of defense can be made for you. Your case is in the hands of Attorney White—Seymour White. He'll make your fight for you."

She made a single weary gesture.

"What's the use? It's too late, Your Honor. No one would want to help me now. I'm down and out. It would be kinder just to let the end come as quickly as possible."

"But," he argued, "I want to help you. A really bad woman would not have fought as you did for the life of a dog. And, by the way, where is your dog now?"

She crouched lower.

"He died that night."

Judge Carew looked away for a moment, then back at the limp black figure. He was conscious of a sense of oppression, of suffocation almost.

He put out his hand and took hers.



"I don't know where you found your strange theory of Life," he said gently, "but it's a rather wonderful one. If nothing else can help you, perhaps Life itself will. There is always some hope left."

With a resignation that was somehow terrible she rose and let him lead her to the door where a guard was waiting to take her in charge.

All the way home the judge could think of nothing but the woman—her eyes, and the terrible sound of her crying. She was not utterly depraved. He found himself wondering, heavily, which was blacker, crime or hardness of heart. Love had been known to "cover a multitude of sins." This woman had loved only a dumb thing, it is true, but she had been loved in return. . . .

He had an intuition, as he drove on, that the wheel of Destiny was turning between Annie Crehan and the electric chair; that Life was withholding her from the whip of the law.

Later, in the privacy of his garden, Judge Carew smoked restlessly, waiting for the night. Dusk came on velvet feet, a slow, soft presence that shed peace about him. The moon was not yet risen. One big white star burned on the horizon. The smell of dew-drenched roses drifted on the night wind. The fountain laughed and gurgled, its silver voice like the voice of a nymph at play. Judge Carew tugged at his cigar without pleasure, his face furrowed. He was looking at the lone star. He was thinking of Annie Crehan. And he was very tired.

SUDDENLY he felt that he was not alone in the garden. He was conscious of eyes that watched. He told himself that it was a ridiculous fancy. Who could be here at this hour? He was over-tired, that was all, and stirred by Annie Crehan's curious talk of the afternoon.

What strange faiths the prisoner had! They were almost incredible in one of her type. He wished, recalling her vividly, that she had not had that haunted look in her dark eyes; wished that she had not told him about little Tan—and had not cried so bitterly. Years of judicial experience had never armed him fully against the strength of a woman's tears. They always unmanned him completely.

But again something stirred in the dim end of the garden. He heard a sigh. It was unmistakable. He sat up sharply and listened.

"Is anyone there?" he called nervously.

The hush which answered him was louder than sound. The silence was throbbing with inaudible vibrations. Then . . . the lilac bushes moved. There was a sound in the twilight of the pathway—a sound as of many little feet, marching, marching. . . . They were coming toward him. It was a procession. No, an army!

The judge stood up, breathless.

"Who's there?" he cried hoarsely. "Answer me! Who's moving there? What do you want?"

Silence.

Then, on the soft wind, came an answer. It was a chanting, as of many small voices!

"We are the lives that Annie Crehan tried to save. We are her friends who are coming to help her. We are her invisible protectors, her 'cloud of witnesses.' We are coming to help you to save her from the law. If you don't, we will! We will take her away—away with us."

And then he saw—as one sees shadow-shapes sometimes between waking and sleeping—the phantom forms of those who chanted. And their song was now:

"We are Life! We do not die. We are Life . . . Life . . . Life!"

The motley little group tramped past him, bandaged and splinted, their wounds stanching with white cloths of mercy, their dumb agony lessened by the tenderness of pitying hands.

There was a robin with a broken wing, a sparrow with a torn throat, a humming-bird with a wound in its tiny side, a pigeon stoned.

"It was Annie Crehan who saved us," they whispered, soft as the night wind in their passing. "Annie Crehan, who believes in Life. She healed all our sickness. She protected us and watched over us when there was no one else who would. Annie Crehan!"

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*"He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small,  
For the dear God who loveth us  
He made and loveth all."*

Thus spake the poet.

And Annie Crehan, who had loved and protected the dumb, helpless creatures of the city—sparrows with torn wings, horses starved and beaten, dogs with broken legs—found strange solace in her bare prison cell, even though the Law sentenced her to death as a murderer!

AND then came a cat with its breast rent asunder, another dragging a broken limb, a third whose eyes had been injured, a horse beaten nigh unto exhaustion. And behind them the procession stretched back to the very gates of the garden: dogs with torn flesh, bandaged eyes and battered limbs; horses starved and beaten and frozen—all of them rescued from death. The line of march seemed endless. And all the little spirit creatures seemed to lift beseeching eyes to the man who stood there a-tremble. They sang with love and gratitude of Annie Crehan, the savior of Life; of Annie Crehan, who had taken a life unwittingly, to save one of theirs.

And then walked at the feet of Judge Carew the figure of Tan. By the marking of his coat, the bandage on his shaggy leg, and the almost human love of his pleading eyes, did the judge know him.

Tan stopped. And, clearer than any mortal speech, Judge Carew heard and understood the tongue of the spirit within the

dumb thing. He listened with fast-beating heart. . . .

"Buck Crehan was a fiend," said Tan, "and Annie Crehan killed him only because he was killing me. He had beaten me until my body was almost dead. I was so little—and my leg was broken. I could not help myself. Buck Crehan has taken life over and over again. There was a murder on the pier once . . . Annie Crehan never told. She saved Buck Crehan's life by keeping still. Even when she killed him herself, she never meant to. He was a beast. Don't kill Annie Crehan for the thing she never meant to do!"

And suddenly it seemed to the Judge that there walked with Tan the Life that had been Buck Crehan himself. It was as though shadowy hands stretched out to him from every side—pleading, exhorting, demanding.

"Don't kill Annie Crehan!" ghostly voices cried. "She is not a bad woman. She is good. Her crimes were crimes of love—committed to save something or someone else. And

all the little lives she has saved surround her like a cloud. They are her witnesses. They protect her with an unseen veil. And the man that tears down that veil—must pay the price! His crime is greater than all of hers."

Moonlight silvered the rim of the world. The scent of roses—the little yellow roses shining like tiny moons along the outer wall of the darkened garden—was almost unbearably sweet. It was a fragrance compelling, forcing the Judge's attention like a presence. Across the black, wet grass, he saw the phantom army marching, marching—away from him—back into Eternity. Their wounds were healed now, their sorrows gone. They were strong and upright and at peace. And their chanting was borne back to him still.

"We are Life! We are Life . . . Life . . . Life!"

Judge Carew came to himself with a shock of surprise. A cold sweat dampened his face. Those little mites with their solemn chant—poor little beggars—why, they might actually have hobbled there before him! Annie Crehan's "Cloud of Witnesses"!

He sat down shakily. His limbs were cramped with mental tension, and he was conscious of a deep exhaustion. But some profound pulse of his being had been quickened. Material things had grown suddenly insignificant. The world was less to him than it had been.

SOMEONE touched his shoulder, and he found himself welcoming to the solitude of the garden his friend, Seymour White, the brilliant young lawyer who had undertaken the difficult defense of Annie Crehan.

White took off his hat. The moonlight silvered his strong face against the darkness. The wind lifted his hair as he bent to light a cigar.

"I'm tired," he said, throwing himself on the low bench beside the Judge. "This trial seems to pull me, somehow. Queer thing, the whole case. Can't seem to find any real means of defense. But neither can the other side condemn. There's something about the woman. . . . Have you noticed?"

"Yes. But to-morrow the wheel must turn, White."

"Turn? How?" The lawyer looked at him quickly, every professional faculty alert.

"She's confessed."

White's eyes closed, as though he had been struck. His voice returned on an indignant cry.

"Confessed! Good God! To whom? She's my client."

Judge Carew sat quietly.

"To me," he said. "I broke every custom and precedent of the profession and stayed to talk with her to-night. She's moved me out of all proportion to her case. As you say, there's something about her—"

White leaned forward and gripped the older man's hand. "Yes. Listen! It's madness, but I have an uncomfortable feeling all the time that she's being protected by some higher force than I, some force that no court in the world will be able to stand against, whatever its decision. It's uncanny. I've never handled any case like it. It makes me feel like a superstitious, sentimental fool. I can't understand myself. What did she have to say to you?"

Slowly Judge Carew told him. White seemed to turn to stone as he listened.

"Strange!" he declared again. "All very strange. And I can't help feeling sorry. Crehan was a curse to society, in every way. She's relieved us of him. And now," he shrugged, "we must kill her for doing us a good deed, for relieving us of a public menace."

But Judge Carew interrupted: "She won't be killed." The words were unexpected, and his tone carried conviction as he added: "She's protected."

"By whom?" A great astonishment was in White's voice.

"There are forces. . . ." The Judge hesitated and groped for the right words. "White, do you believe in life after death? No—I mean, do you believe there isn't any death? That everything has an undying spirit?"

White was slow to answer.

"I don't know," he confessed. "It isn't easy to feel sure of those things, however much one would like to. It would seem a sensible theory on the whole, though, that the Spark in us is above death. Science tells us positively that nothing is ever lost. Then why should the Life that is in us be?"

"Us!" echoed Judge Carew. "Have we the monopoly on Life, then? If we survive, why shouldn't all created things? Animals, for instance?"

He felt that White was smiling in the darkness, but the lawyer's voice was earnest.

"I don't know that either. But the essential idea isn't so bad, Judge. There are sects that hold to it. It's an old belief, perhaps as old as the race. And it's quite possible."

"White—" Judge Carew choked for a second, "I've never been anything but a practical man. You know that. I've never had time for fads and psychic phenomena; I've been too busy upholding the law. And, besides, I've never put much stock in those things. . . . I'm beginning to believe I may have been wrong, though. Time may prove that they're really been leading slowly to something higher all the while, and that we were still too near them, in our generation, to see it. But it's my sincere belief that this Annie Crehan is being helped by invisible intervention of some sort."

"But if she's confessed—if to-morrow the confession's known? Her past is all against her, you know. And I'm afraid her record is a pretty black one, for a woman, even though I'm fighting for her and want to see her win."

Again Carew cut in sharply: "You're mistaken, in one way. Her past is all for her—if we can get the jury to look at it rightly. Her crimes have all been crimes of love. I'd like to see you, as her lawyer, open some way for her real story to be told."

"And then?" White was interested with a more than merely professional interest.

Carew explained. "With men of reputation backing her, it can be proved that some abnormal impulse of the brain, or some physical cause in the body was responsible for the killing of Buck Crehan. Instead of the electric chair, the woman would get medical attention and rest, and a fresh chance in the world."

White was profoundly moved. The judge had edged close to one of his own unique theories pertaining to crime. His hand tightened against the back of the bench.

"I WISH it could be so," White said. "It's always been my firm belief—though I realize that it's a theory many years ahead of my generation—that crime can't be cold-blooded. There isn't any such thing. Not in any case. Crime of any sort seems to me an outward expression of some inner maladjustment. A normal and healthy person can control himself. He is not destructive, but constructive. I've walked through the prisons many times just to study faces in their relation to crime. And in every face, whatever the age or class of the individual, I've never failed to find the clue. There is always that little mark of betrayal. Crime is either insanity or physical abnormality. Go through the prisons some day, Judge, with just that in mind and make a study for yourself. It will convince you far better than words."

But the Judge replied: "I don't need to look outside of my courtroom. I've made my own little study there for years. And I want to help this prisoner on trial now. I've never been strong for the electric chair on circumstantial evidence. There's too much uncertainty about it, and too much of good in every human composition, if that good can only be reached. If it can't be reached, then, as you believe, there is need for medical treatment somewhere."

Silence fell again in the dim garden. The wind crept lightly among the trees. The fountain was as the voice of an oracle in the stillness. And to the melody of it Judge Carew still seemed to hear the marching of countless little feet.

Back from the moonlit horizon came the psalm of Annie



Crehan's dumb witnesses: "We are Life . . . Life . . . Life."

He wished that he could put his revelation into words—could tell White of it. But there are some things which defy communication, even to an old, tried friend.

Judge Carew awakened at dawn to a sense of impending ill. The premonition of approaching failure oppressed him like an actual weight. He rose and made ready to drive into town early. He felt a consuming desire to speak to White again before the doors of the court should open for the day.

When he reached the steps of the rambling brick building he saw that a little knot of women was gathered there before him. It was a pitiful little band; the kind of women who somehow manage to live on in unabating misery, and yet keep the truest instincts of womanhood.

ONE of them stepped up to the magistrate as he approached. She was a stout, puffy figure with wispy hair and sallow skin, her body swathed in a faded dress. A tousled, overgrown infant whined and fretted in her arms. The woman's face was filled with a stony look of worry. She accosted him in a terror of confusion—the confusion of the ignorant in the presence of those whom they have been taught to look upon as omniscient.

"Judge Carew—sir," she began breathlessly, "I've come a long way to tell you, sir, that I've knowed the prisoner, Annie Crehan, for years—and so's all these other women here. And she ain't guilty. We've knowed that from the first. She couldn't be. She's that kind, Judge Carew! Her sort don't take life. They couldn't kill a flea if they was to try. Why, I've see her time and time again, settin' and nursin' sick dogs and cats and birds and things. Always doin' for somethin' she was, and goin' without herself to do it. And when my young one was born . . . why, she come and set with me like a Sister of Mercy, so she did. And scrubbed and baked and did for my man. And this Buck Crehan—he was a brute. Everybody our ways knows that. And knows how 'twas him as killed Dago John on the docks two years ago come Christmas. And Annie done white by him. She never made no fuss. 'Twas her keepin' a still mouth that's saved him more'n once. And the way he'd curse and beat and bully her quick's there was a drink in him! I've seen him try to drive her on the streets to git him drink money. She'd have to run to my man for help. She ain't guilty, Judge Carew. It ain't in her. All of us here's ready to swear the good we always see her do—if that'll help her any."

A gray, steely mask seemed to drop over the features of Carew's face. If this evidence had only been gathered earlier! If the woman had gone to White with this same story, something might have been done. But now—

"Unfortunately," he said crisply, "you've come too late, my good woman. The prisoner has already confessed. And we must accept the verdict of the law."

He pushed by and shut himself up alone in the court house.

The trial went against Annie Crehan. The heat had touched a sullen, responsive chord in the breasts of the mob that pushed its way into the court. They were inflamed. Their wrath had in it a quality of passion—for sensation, for conviction, for death.

White fought a good fight—so good that the jury and his opponents watched him with wondering eyes, and the whisper went around the court:

"If you didn't know who and what White was, you'd think he'd some connection with this Crehan woman, the way he's battling to get her clear."

He was pale to the lips and dripping perspiration. The moving power of his voice stirred tears more than once.

Annie Crehan herself was white and motionless. Once, as the jury filed out, she turned almost imperceptibly in her seat, and glanced up at Judge Carew. Her eyes were like bottomless pools in which Eternity was reflected. Then she looked away again—and it seemed to him that she smiled.

When the verdict was brought in, there was no outcry, no scene of violence. Annie Crehan accepted it silently. Her face did not change color. She sat a little straighter in her chair, that was all, and, reaching up, quietly arranged a pin in her hair. A shadow of horror crept over the room. That a woman could commit murder and be sentenced to execution and yet sit there quietly, in the sight of them all, smiling wordlessly and fixing her hair! The frenzied populace of an hour ago trooped away, cowed and silent. They were quelled by something unseen—something they felt, but could not pretend to understand.

White and the Judge went to speak to the condemned woman later on.

"There isn't much," Carew told her, "that anyone can say now. If there's anything we can do . . ."

White struggled with his collar.

"This heat!" he managed to mutter to Annie Crehan. "If it hadn't been for that, the mood of the crowd . . . I thought we'd win out for you. It doesn't seem yet that you— It's like a nightmare."

She smoothed the seam of her dress. Some of the jaggedness had left her face. There was something almost rapt now about her smile.

"It's no matter," she said. "I never expected anything else. And now—there's something to look forward to at last. I'll be seeing Tan again. He was the only living thing that ever really loved me—that understood. I've had a feeling all last night that something, someone, was close to me. I shall be quite all right. I'm not afraid."

Her voice failed her for a moment.

Judge Carew's lips twisted with grim pain.

"If there's anything anyone can do for you—" he fretted.

She stood up and walked across the cold little cell and back again.

"If I could have a little bunch of yellow roses," she said unexpectedly, her words scarcely above a whisper. "I used to love them so when I was a little, clean thing, before—all this. They seem nearer than anything else I know to the sunshine. I think I dread leaving the sunshine most of all. I'm not afraid of dying. It's not that. Not really. But when I think of all the light and warmth and the goldenness of the sun—I get hurting, somehow, inside. Things live in the sunshine. You can't think much about death where sunlight is."

OUTSIDE, in the passage, both men were silent for a moment. Judge Carew, privileged as an older man, openly wiped his eyes.

"I'm going to drive out to the old garden," he said, striving to make his voice sound natural. "I never thought much about those little yellow roses along the back wall. I'm used to them. But now that I think of it, they are like sunshine—sunshine given form."

An hour later the two men returned, laden with fragrant sheaves of yellow-petaled roses to be sent in to Annie Crehan for the night. The matron, an old friend of both Judge and lawyer through years of association, took the golden burden from their arms and went in with it at once. The men's unusual sympathy for Annie Crehan had awakened in her a curiosity that deepened speedily to pity. She hoped that the flowers might bring a little comfort to those haunted eyes. Annie Crehan seemed to her a brave soul to face death without horror or protest. There had been other women who had created scenes of panic—wild, primitive, and terrible, like animals caught in a death-trap. And the matron had heard the story of Tan. . . .

She was some little time in coming back. When she did, her face was contorted, her eyes wide. Her customary professional calm had been shattered like a glass veneer.

"Judge Carew," she stammered, "— Mr. White . . . I—something has happened. The nurse went right up. I took your roses in and I noticed—something—oh, I don't know! . . . She was lying on the (Continued on page 94)

By  
GEORGE T. OSBORN  
As told to  
Wilbert Wadleigh



What Has Gone Before:

THE filming of Frank Padgett's mystery novel, *The Scorpion*, brought a strange series of accidents and disasters to the Summit studios. The last and most tragic catastrophe was the explosion that blinded the author. Still undaunted Padgett put Clayton Caldwell in charge of the picture and made me the assistant director. Clay and I, in going over the script, discovered some startling facts.

In the story the "Scorpion" is a vicious fiend who has victimized many motion-picture celebrities through drugs and occult practices. Chief among his prey is a beautiful screen star, "Lucille Ames," whose career he has financed in order to use her as a pawn. She later falls in love with a novelist who tries to free her from the "Scorpion's" spell. But the Evil One is too strong; and lest she betray him, he forces her to commit suicide.

I was immediately struck by the coincidence that Padgett's own fiancée, Sybil Dale, also a beautiful star, had killed herself! Was the story of the "Scorpion" based on fact? I said nothing to Caldwell about my suspicions, but we both found, to our amazement, that the final sequence of the scenario had not been written!

Late that night I received a summons from Elinor Dean, the lovely actress who was playing the part of "Lucille Ames" in the picture. She was almost hysterical and told me that she had seen the ghost of Sybil Dale, who seemed to be urging her to leave Hollywood. When the wraith vanished, Elinor had found on the table in her room a blood-red

"Cassim!" I cried in alarm. "Elinor—has she come to?"

square of paper, bearing in one corner a writhing golden scorpion!

We drove immediately to the home of Ali Cassim, a Hindu mystic in the east, who, strangely enough, was expecting us.

Elinor's fears overcame her when Cassim revealed that she was at the mercy of the "Scorpion," a living fiend and not merely a character in Padgett's novel! Her only safeguard would be the love which, he predicted, was to develop between her and myself—and which would be an invincible protection.

Cassim and Madame Feunier, a medium, later held a séance at Elinor's apartment and made an unsuccessful attempt to trap the "Scorpion" into revealing his identity.

On the following evening some of the final episodes of the story were being filmed in Laurel Canyon. Padgett himself was present, his head swathed in bandages.

All at once Elinor began to act as though bewitched. Swiftly she lifted the stiletto she had been using in the scene—and endeavored to plunge it into the back of the blind man! In the nick of time I stayed her hand and felt her collapse in my arms—just as a volley of shots rang out from the woods across the road!

# HOLLYWOOD

*The "Scorpion" strikes again—and a lovely actress and a great director face an uncanny death. Who—or what—is this monster that can vent its murderous hatred without fear of discovery?*

THE shot fired by Taylor, Padgett's secretary, was answered by two more from across the road; one of them, crashing into the windshield of Padgett's landau, sent glass flying in all directions. I heard hoarse, frightened cries and the sound of running feet near me.

made our way to the shadowy shape of Cassim's black sedan, where the frightened negro chauffeur made haste to open the door for us. We managed to get Elinor inside, and Cassim immediately set to work reviving her. She was just stirring with returning consciousness when I heard Clayton Caldwell shouting my name.

"Now what does Clay want?" I grumbled.

"Better go and find out," Cassim said. "I'll look after Miss Dean, never fear—"

"Oh!" came Elinor's voice. "George—Cassim! What happened? Where am I?"

"It's all right, Miss Dean," Cassim said softly. "You had a fainting spell. You're in my car, now. Osborn! Please find Padgett and tell him that she is with me, and herself again."

"All right," I responded reluctantly. "Are you feeling better, Elinor?"

"I—I suppose I'll be all right, George," she murmured. "Don't be gone long."

"I won't," I promised, pressing her hand and leaving the car.

The sound of a motor drifted to me from across the road, and a long, black car leaped from the grove of oaks, heading out of the canyon. Several voices shouted at once; four shots roared out from the trees, fired no doubt by Taylor and the motorcycle officer after the receding car.

"George Osborn!" came Caldwell's fretful voice, from somewhere in the shadow of the trees across the road.

"Coming!" I called, making my way toward him as fast as I could.

The engine of a motorcycle roared into action, as the officer raced after the fleeing car. I grasped the situation in an instant; the mysterious gunmen had gotten away in the car—men whom the monstrous "Scorpion" had employed to carry out some sinister plot. I met Caldwell head-on, just as I reached this dread conclusion.

"SO here you are!" he grunted. "What the devil is all this shooting about, George? Who were those men?"

"I don't know, Clay," I replied, "unless—" I hesitated. "Unless what?" he demanded.

"Unless this is some of the 'Scorpion's' devilish work," I said resignedly. It was time that Caldwell knew part of



Some one collided with me in the darkness.

"Who fired from here just now?" a hoarse voice growled. It was the motorcycle officer we had engaged for a small bit in the picture that night.

"I did," answered Taylor's voice. "Are you the officer? Come on then; let's get those chaps before they make a break."

A spot-light on one of the cars flashed on. My one thought in the confusion was of Elinor. I ran back to the set and found the Hindu bending over her.

"Cassim!" I cried in alarm. "Elinor—has she come to yet?"

"Not yet. I am afraid. . . . Here, help me get her to my car—hurry!"

Together we carefully lifted the unconscious girl and

"Not yet. I am afraid. . . . Help me get her to my car—hurry!"

the truth, about the dreadful events of the past few days. "The 'Scorpion'?" he echoed, seizing me by the arm. "Are you crazy, Osborn? What has the villain of this crazy picture got to do—?"

"The 'Scorpion' exists, you chump!" I said impatiently. "All the characters Padgett wrote about existed—still exist, excepting Lucille Ames, who was the late Sybil Dale—"

"What?" Clay grunted, incredulous. "That's the truth," I snapped irritably. "I'll tell you more about it later. Where's Frank Padgett?"

"Well, of all—Padgett?" He was sitting in that canvas chair . . . Oh, Padgett!" he called.

There was no answer. I saw that the portable generator was still running.

"Bill! Art!" I shouted to the electricians in charge of the two sun-arcs. "Let's have some light."

There was a quavering acknowledgement from Bill, and his sun-arc flared on, flooding the canyon with its powerful white beam. The three automobiles we had been using in the picture were still as we had placed them for the taking of the final scene in the canyon, the drivers huddled in their seats. The two pseudo-bandits and the two athletic, square-jawed men we had engaged to play detectives were kneeling together in fear behind a huge boulder at the side of the road.

The cameramen, assistants, and others of the technical staff were standing about in groups, but a glance toward the spot where the blind author-director, Frank Padgett, had been sitting disclosed only the overturned canvas chair. He was gone!

"That's strange!" Caldwell exclaimed wonderingly. "Have any of you men seen Padgett?" I inquired of the staff in general.

They stared at the overturned chair, giving vent to startled exclamations.

"I heard him holler to Taylor, just before that car lit out," the second cameraman volunteered.

Just then the beam from the sun-arc picked out two men who were making their way toward us from the other side of the road. One, a tall, athletic man in a blue serge suit and fedora hat I knew to be Arthur Taylor, personnel manager of *The Scorpion* production unit and Padgett's secretary. He was supporting his companion, or rather leading him by the arm, and as they turned to pass around one of the cars, the light fell upon that gaunt, stooping figure, upon the white bandages that completely swathed his head and left hand—Padgett.

"There's Padgett!" Caldwell exclaimed unnecessarily. "How the deuce did he get across the road?"

I was troubled by the same question, in my own mind. "Miss Dean?" Padgett called hoarsely. "Where is Miss Dean?"

"She's with Ali Cassim, in his car," I said.

He turned his sightless, bandaged features in my direction, his hands trembling violently.

"Is she herself now?" he asked.

"She was recovering from her spell just a few moments ago."

"Thank God for that!" Padgett groaned, as Taylor righted the canvas chair and guided the stricken man into it. Padgett's white-clad and equally white-faced attendant appeared from somewhere, and bent over him solicitously.

Caldwell stepped forward grimly.

"I say, Padgett," he said spiritedly, "what was the meaning of that shooting a while ago? I—"

"We won't know the meaning of it," Taylor snapped, "unless that motorcycle officer manages to overtake and arrest those men."

Caldwell regarded him sharply, and glanced at me; then back at Taylor again.

"Osborn just told me—" he began, but I grabbed him by the arm.

"Say nothing of that now," I whispered.

Caldwell stared at me, but before he could reply, Padgett said:

"Caldwell, as Taylor says, we probably won't learn the meaning of that shooting unless those men are apprehended. I have some theories of my own, which I will divulge to you in private sometime tomorrow. Meanwhile, let's get organized again, and clean up this canyon sequence."

We all stared at him, amazed, though by this time we had reason to know that Padgett's ruling passion was the completion of *The Scorpion*.

"Well," Caldwell said at length, "I guess it's the thing to do, as long as we have all the equipment up here, providing Miss Dean doesn't—"

"Miss Dean," came the deep voice of Ali Cassim, "is herself again, and ready to go through with that final scene."

The Hindu's tall figure appeared, with Elinor beside him, her features pale but composed, and her lips set in a determined line.

"I am ready, Mr. Caldwell . . . Mr. Padgett," she announced calmly, "I'm sorry for that attack of hysteria that overpowered me. I suppose it was my nerves; I've been unstrung lately."

It did not require the glance she favored me with to convince me that her remark had been made for the benefit of the technical staff and the minor players present. My heart went out to her for her courage and tact.

"Ah, my dear!" Padgett exclaimed, "you're true blue! Caldwell, please call everyone here, so that I may make an announcement."

Caldwell had little to do, as the entire personnel had collected around us.

"They are all here now, Mr. Padgett," he said. "Pay attention, everybody!"

"This is what I have to say," Padgett said. "An explanation for the excitement here tonight is due you, and I will be brief—brief, because the burns I have suffered make it painful for me to talk very loudly. I ask my secretary, Arthur Taylor, to give this announcement to the press in the morning, as well."

"Ever since I started production on this film version of my recent mystery novel, *The Scorpion*, talk has spread around the Summit Studios and Hollywood that the picture was a hoodoo. Accidents happened; delays occurred—all of them misfortunes that were due to a chance combination of circumstances."

I SMILED grimly. How carefully worded that was! I saw that Padgett was attempting subtly to persuade the staff that the troubles that had featured the ill-favored production had been due to mere chance, and not the deliberate planning of a resourceful, tireless and unscrupulous enemy.

"Many persons in this business are superstitious," Padgett continued. "When, last Saturday morning, a mercury lamp exploded at the studio, destroying my eyesight, these superstitious persons were convinced that *The Scorpion* was a 'jinx' picture. If they choose to think that—if they choose to make capital of it, that is their business. I have never been averse to publicity, even of this type; publicity is the Great God of Cinema."

"Tonight, however," and his tone took on a hard quality, "something happened here that affects me personally; myself alone, though most of you may not have thought so. It is I who was fired upon by those desperados—I whose life they sought to take—and I have only Taylor and that motorcycle officer to thank for routing these criminals before they could accomplish their purpose."

He paused, amid a tense, respectful silence.

"I am very sorry," he resumed, "for the sake of the rest of you, that this occurred, for those bullets went wild, and might well have found a victim other than myself. But I am not surprised, now that it is over. Some time ago, because of something I had written—something true—a very wealthy and unscrupulous man became my enemy, threatened to kill

me—and," Padgett shuddered, "very nearly succeeded——"

Startled exclamations arose on every hand.

"Who this man is I will not—nay, cannot say. I did not take his threat seriously. But since this attempt on my life tonight, I am forced to believe that this man was behind it, and that his threat was no idle one. Therefore, I shall take certain precautions to insure my safety, and enlist the aid of the authorities in attempting to bring my enemy to justice. More I cannot say on this occasion."

I could not but admire the man for his undaunted courage. Elinor was regarding him with a suspicion of tears in her eyes, and the dusky features of Ali Cassim bore a beatific expression.

Needless to say, Padgett's remarks created a sensation, but his carefully worded statement failed to blind a few of us—Elinor, Cassim, Taylor, and myself—to the truth. As far as the others were concerned, it had obviously been Padgett's purpose to set them at rest regarding the misfortunes that had befallen the picture, and by telling them only part of the hideous truth, to focus attention and sympathy upon himself and his cause.

There was not much time to speculate upon his remarks, for, once they were concluded, Padgett asked Caldwell to resume work, and complete the canyon sequence. Whatever Caldwell's own feelings were, he was too experienced a director to let them interfere at a moment like this.

"Back on the job, boys," he called. "Come on—snap into it! We want to get home. Art! Let's have your sun-arc."

I joined him in getting things lined up, and at last all was in readiness. Elinor took her place in the middle car, setting an example of calmness, and the minor players resumed their places. The stiletto Elinor had dropped was found, and given to her.

"Now let's rehearse this, and if it's good, we'll take a crack at it," Caldwell called through his megaphone from the camera parallel. "Remember, all three cars come into the scene to their present positions. You drivers, note these positions carefully. No carelessness, now. Are you ready, Elinor?"

"Yes, Mr. Caldwell," she replied.

"Good. We'll start the action where the bandit car is supposed to cut in in front of your machine, Elinor, and force your driver to stop. That will be the second blast of my whistle; here's the first, now. Got it? All right. You men," Caldwell called to the two actors who were portraying bandits, "will get your cue with the next whistle; you know the action. Harry," to one of the two men playing private detectives, "we'll want you in the rehearsal; the next whistle brings your car into its present position, and then comes your scrap with the bandits. There will be no takes now; just run through the business. Let's go."

THE pseudo-detectives got into the third car of the string, and the driver backed the machine out of the camera lines. The bandits took their position in their own car, and Elinor disappeared into the tonneau of the central machine.

The rehearsal left little to be desired. At Clay's first whistle, Elinor's driver went through the business of pulling the emergency brake lever; at the second, the celluloid bandits sprang from their car, covered the driver of Elinor's machine with their revolvers, and threw open the door, dragging Elinor out. Her struggle followed, during which she drew the stiletto, and as she was being overpowered, another blast of Clay's whistle brought in the third car, and the detectives. The scene ended with the wounding of one of the bandits, his rescue by the other, and their flight. An

extra camera was in readiness to secure close-ups with a three-inch lens.

"That's fine!" Caldwell enthused. "Now let's get two good takes, and we'll go home. Bring out the machines."

Clay conferred with Padgett, and I busied myself getting the three cars backed up in place, ready to come on again. But we hit a snag at the outset, when the driver of the bandit car, starting too soon, capped the climax by advancing almost out of range of the cameras. We tried it again, and this time he stopped too short, partially covering Elinor's car.

Caldwell's anger was justified, for the man was supposed to be an experienced chauffeur. The whole trouble was, that the recent shooting and attendant excitement were still fresh in his mind, and he was too shaken to do his bit properly. At Clay's bidding, I replaced him at the wheel of the machine, and the cars were backed up again.

Fortunately, there was no more trouble, for my own nerves were on edge, as were those of everyone else. Two takes were made of the scene, and Clay's familiar and welcome call of "Wrap 'em up!" set us to packing.

WE had hardly begun the preparations for our leave-taking, when a police car—judging by its red spotlight and siren—appeared around the curve below us, preceded by a motorcycle.

It was the motorcycle officer who had been assigned to us, returning with detectives from the Hollywood Police Station. We learned that the bandit car had managed to elude the officer, probably by nosing into a wooded section at the side of the canyon to wait, with extinguished lights, until he went by. Outwitted, the officer had telephoned in a description of the machine.

The detectives conferred at length with Padgett and Taylor, examining the spot where the desperados had fired upon us, and finding a clue in the shape of a shabby tweed cap. The shattered windshield of Padgett's car came in for examination and discussion.

Padgett made few remarks. Who his enemy was, he seemed unable to say, asking Taylor to take the situation in hand.

Whatever it was that was discussed by Taylor and the officers, apart from the rest of us, the result was that Taylor got into the police car with the officers, and the machine hurried back out of the canyon.

Padgett spoke briefly to Elinor and Cassim, and called Caldwell and me over.

"As I told you, Caldwell," he said, "I want a word with you in private tomorrow about this situation. Do you think we've finished up with this canyon stuff?"

"I hardly think there'll be any need for retakes," Caldwell replied. "I suppose we go on those Dale interiors tomorrow on Stage Three?"

"Yes; a day ahead of schedule, but so much the better. What time was the company called for—one o'clock?"

"Yes, they all understand that we start shooting after lunch. When will you be down?"

"At that time, but I'd like you and Osborn to drop up to *Eagle's Nest* at around half-past eleven, and take luncheon with me. What I have to tell you can be gone over at that time."

This was agreed upon, and Clayton and the hospital attendant assisted the blind Padgett to his car. I found Elinor in the act of entering Cassim's sedan.

"Yes, Cassim is going to drop me at my hotel, George," she replied to my inquiry. "I feel all right, now, and Cassim says that he has arranged for Madame Fennier to share my apartment with me—"

"Yes," the Hindu interposed, "starting tomorrow night.



It is best that we take no further chances, and Madame Fenner understands what to do in case of an emergency. What was it that you wanted to ask me about, Osborn?"

His question gave me a start, though I might have expected that he would read my mind.

"I was going to ask you something," I admitted, "and it is this: will you release me from my pledge of secrecy concerning what you revealed to Elinor and me about the 'Scorpion'?"

He frowned.

"Caldwell, eh?" he countered shrewdly.

"Yes. Cassim—Clayton Caldwell is my best friend; a man of unusual character and attainments, utterly fearless, and entirely trustworthy. If I am not mistaken, it is Frank Padgett's intention to confide the truth, or part of it, in him tomorrow. Do you know what will happen when Padgett tells him of the 'Scorpion'—the various occult and spirit angles?"

"You mean—" Cassim suggested.

"That Clay is the rankest sort of materialist. He prides himself on being a skeptic. In short, he'll tell Padgett to reserve quarters at Patton Asylum, and walk out of his contract—quit the picture cold. I know Clay; I soldiered with him overseas——"

"OH," Elinor exclaimed, "I think he's a splendid director; it would be unfortunate if he left."

Cassim bit his lip, regarding me thoughtfully.

"You want to explain these things to him yourself, then? Break the ice, so to speak?" he asked.

"Exactly. Tonight. I'll ask Clay to spend the evening with me. I can tell you that I don't relish the job one bit, but I know that he'll believe me before he would Padgett or anyone else."

The Hindu nodded thoughtfully.

"Very well, then; tell him, Osborn. I am glad to leave the matter in your hands. But bind him to secrecy. The time is not yet ripe to permit these facts to get abroad."

"I can assure you that what I tell Caldwell will be in strict confidence," I said. "But I don't promise that he will believe me; he has a mind of his own. All I can do is try."

"It is well," Cassim said gravely.

Elinor asked me to call her up at ten the following morning, promising to ring me if anything went wrong before then. I bade them good-night, and Cassim's car headed out of the canyon.

Caldwell had just finished signing the pay-vouchers of the extra players, when I stopped by and invited him to stop overnight at my lodge, only a scant hundred yards up the canyon. He accepted readily, for he had been my guest on several other occasions and had always liked the little place. So, a half hour later, our cars put away, we entered the house.

"What a great night this has been!" Clay grumbled as I switched on the lights. "The leading woman goes batty, and tries to spear Padgett with a prop stiletto; two honest-to-God bandits appear a few seconds later, and take potshots at the same gentleman——"

He tossed his hat to the davenport.

"And you—when I ask you what it's all about—give me some senseless guff about the 'Scorpion' being responsible! I suppose you've invited me to stop over here tonight so I can keep my eye on you, and send for the wagon when you get violent."

I realized that I was going to have my hands full.

"If you had been with me last night, Clayton," I said drily, "you would have thought tonight's episode was a picnic in comparison. Come on to the kitchen," as he stared at me. "We'll brew some coffee, and I'll try to entertain you with the best bedtime story you ever heard."

When I had put the percolator on, I took a seat facing Clay, meeting his curious eyes steadily.

"Now, old timer," I began, "do you recall my exact remark to you tonight?"

"Sure thing," he said grimly. "You said that the shooting tonight was pulled off by agents of the 'Scorpion'—the fictitious villain of Padgett's crazy novel, and crazier picture of that name; that the story of *The Scorpion* was taken from life, or some such rubbish——"

"It was," I cut in. "Clay, you've known me long enough to realize that I have a fair amount of common sense and that I'm not given to prevarication. Well," as he shrugged, nodding, "you're also aware of the misfortunes that have attended the filming of this picture from the very start. There's no need of going into that again, save to point out to you that these things were *not accidents*. They were deliberately planned and executed, to prevent the completion of the film——"

"By whom?" Caldwell grunted.

"By the 'Scorpion.'"

He laughed.

"Now I'll tell one! See here, George——"

"Clay," I snapped angrily, "don't be a chump! I'm going to try and tell you some things that I've found out within the past forty-eight hours—things you, too, should know. Here is the whole thing in a nutshell: when Frank Padgett wrote *The Scorpion*, weird and horrible as the thing is, he wrote of *actual facts*. Get that? Facts. The only thing he did with his material was to give the characters fictitious names; and perhaps change a few situations here and there. But the 'Scorpion' existed, and now exists—in Hollywood!"

Clay knew that I was serious. He regarded me silently for several moments, trying to reconcile long ingrained habits of mind with this astounding statement. His mobile features were indicative of the struggle that was going on within him—a struggle between disbelief in things occult and psychic, as represented by the story of *The Scorpion*, and his respect and affection for me.

Before he had time to summon his arguments I plunged on. I told him what I knew of the misfortunes that had befallen Frank Padgett ever since the day his novel *The Scorpion* had been set up in print; I told him of the telephone call I had received from Elinor Dean at a late hour two nights before; of my response that had plunged me into contact with incredible and amazing occult and spirit forces.

Like myself, Caldwell had considered Ali Cassim merely a Hindu "type" whom Padgett had selected for the rôle of Chundra Sha in the ill-fated picture, but I told him the truth: that Cassim was a genuine mystic of the highest order; and I backed up the statement by giving my personal experiences with the Hindu's powers.

WHEN I paused to remove the plug from the percolator, and pour out the coffee, Caldwell, though he had attempted to interrupt me several times during the early part of my discourse, had nothing to say. His bushy, sandy brows were drawn together in concentration, his keen blue eyes were narrowed, regarding the floor abstractedly, and his lean features betrayed that, incredible as my revelations had been, my exposition had carried that conviction which comes from utter sincerity.

Only when I had made a trip to the ice-box for cream, and had set sugar and a tray of crackers on the table, did he break the silence.

"George," he said with emotion, "I am at last convinced that you're sane; I've never known you to be so eloquent in setting forth an argument. But how you could have gone through such experiences without losing your sanity, is beyond me—and in spite of my prejudices, I am forced to believe that you did go through them! But why, knowing me as you do, have you taken such pains to convince me of these things?"

"Because I admire and sympathize with Padgett, and have pledged my loyalty to the production; because I love Elinor, who would face death rather than desert Padgett—not only

because he took her from an obscure tent-show dramatic company and gave her the leading rôle in the picture, due to her resemblance to the late Sybil Dale, but because she is in complete sympathy with his fight against these forces of evil. In short, Clay, it would be a serious blow to us if you should throw over the direction and completion of the picture."

Caldwell surveyed me narrowly.

"I didn't know I was so indispensable." He smiled. "Anyway, I'll stick; my curiosity is aroused, now. I suppose Padgett plans on telling me the situation tomorrow."

"No doubt," I said, "and I wanted to prime you for it. The chances are that, had I not done so, you would have considered Padgett insane, and washed your hands of the picture."

"Humph!" Clay grunted. "I guess you're right, George. Lord—astral bodies, ghosts of Hollywood, visions in a crystal, and what-not—yes; you're right. But see here, George—you claim that Padgett hopes that the 'Scorpion' will reveal himself by some careless move, in his attempts to prevent the completion of the picture."

"So I understand it."

"BUT why should the picture bother this human devil, if he exists? The book was published; is in its sixth or seventh printing, I understand. The facts, therefore, are known, and the picture merely follows the novel—"

"Follows it up to a certain point," I corrected. "As you know, Clay, provision was made in the scenario for an added episode. The book ends with the 'Scorpion' still a mysterious entity. He isn't arrested, and made to suffer for his crimes—"

"Oh, sure!" Clay said impatiently. "Padgett knows he couldn't end the film that way; he has to have the arrest, and the clearing up of the case in general."

"Well," I smiled, watching to see how he would take my final revelation, "that sequence will be the *real thing*—the actual arrest of the villain, and his unmasking! Can you imagine anything more dramatic?"

Clay stared at me open-mouthed.

"Humph!" he grunted, at length, "Padgett seems certain that he'll unmask said son of the Devil!"

"He's about staked his life on it," I said grimly. "And now to answer the question you put, as to why the filming of the picture should annoy this fiend:

"We now have to deal with psychic and occult forces. By producing the story of the 'Scorpion'—in other words the tragedy of the late Sybil Dale, who was that monster's slave and principal pawn—Padgett employs living actors to enact the various rôles. In so doing, they both set up and attract psychic vibrations." Here I made the comparison to the magnetic needles as Cassim had explained it to me two nights before. "You see, Clay? These vibrations are powerful. They're bound to, and have, caused the 'Scorpion' no end of annoyance, because they conflict with his own *evil* experiments."

"That they have done so is conclusively proven by the attempts he has made to wreck the production—the one to-night being a vicious combination of occult force and more material gun-play; the latter having been planned in case the former failed of its object, as it did."

"You mean that when Elinor tried to kill Padgett with that stiletto, she was under the spell of the 'Scorpion'?" I nodded emphatically.

"Of course. And in that episode, Clay, you beheld a form of occult hypnotism, achieved, no doubt, from a considerable distance—full proof of the uncanny powers possessed by this monster."

We discussed the strange situation for several minutes over our coffee, and resumed it in the living-room before the blazing logs in the fireplace. Little by little, Caldwell became more and more convinced of the truth of my statements.

Finally he stuck out his hand, and I grasped it eagerly.

"Then," I exclaimed, "you're going to stick? See this thing through with us?"

"And how!" Clay grinned. "Why, man, I'm so curious that it hurts! Watch my smoke. George; we're a day ahead of our shooting schedule now, and it'll be more than that at the end of the week. And just let anybody try and stop me!"

We managed to obtain about six hours of sleep that eventful morning, before the alarm I had set for ten o'clock awakened us. I called up Elinor, and found that she had spent an undisturbed night. "How did you make out with Mr. Caldwell, George?" she asked anxiously.

"Fine," I said. "He's now a member of the Anti-Scorpion Society, more out of curiosity than anything else. We're taking lunch with Frank today, before going to the studio, and I imagine Padgett will be able to tell Clay more than I can—"

"Oh, George," she interjected, her voice trembling with excitement, "Cassim told me a good deal last night, and it seems that the contest between our forces and those of the enemy will soon draw to a climax. George—Cassim told me that they now have an idea who the 'Scorpion' is!"

I indicated my surprised satisfaction. "You mean the police, or—"

"Oh, no! Cassim thinks he has found out, but he isn't quite sure yet. As for the police, have you seen the morning paper? Well, it gives an account of what happened last night, and of Padgett's statement. I suppose it will be all over Hollywood before noon. But the 'Scorpion' will see the threat in Frank's statement and he's sure to take it up. Oh, I do hope Padgett is careful!"

"Frank is no fool," I remarked. "My chief concern is you, Elinor."

She said that Cassim's medium, Madame Fennier, would join her that evening as her constant companion and guardian, and that Cassim has assured her that other precautions would be taken to safeguard her.

"All right, Elinor," I said, "I'll see you at the studio this afternoon."

I WENT out and retrieved my morning paper from the lawn, and sure enough, a full column on the front page was given over to the events of the night before, under the heading:

#### FILM TROUPE ATTACKED BY TWO GUNMEN!

Frank Padgett, Famous Author-Director, Is Target for Shots

Hollywood, June 4th: What is said to have been an attempt upon the life of Frank Padgett, famous blind novelist and motion-picture director, took place at an early hour this morning when two bandits opened fire upon the movie troupe from ambush. One bullet missed Padgett by a narrow margin, shattering the windshield of his car, and the writer's rare presence of mind no doubt saved his life when he ordered the sun-arcs that were lighting the scene switched off. Traffic Officer Ted Sorenson of the Hollywood Police Station, attached to the troupe for the evening, and Arthur Taylor, personnel manager of the company and private secretary to Padgett, returned the fire of the bandits, and routed them.

Considerable space was given over to Padgett's statement, somewhat as he had delivered it to us after the shooting, and there followed some speculation over the misfortunes that had attended the filming of the production—speculation that I knew, and later learned for certain, was of the sort that Padgett was anxious to curb.

Caldwell glanced over the item, commenting on the fact that nothing was said which would indicate that the police had any reasonable hopes of apprehending the bandits.

"They had their get-away planned, I'll bet," he concluded. "There's no description of the men, and the chances are

that they used a stolen car. But there are two things that bother me, George, in connection with last night's hilarity."

"What?" I asked.

"Number one: how come Padgett's secretary packs a six-shooter? Has he a permit to do so, or is he really a sort of bodyguard to Frank, as well as secretary and personnel manager of *The Scorpion* unit?"

"Search me," I shrugged. "Taylor is naturally close to Padgett, and he may be a special officer."

"Well, I'm just trying to see daylight through all this. Here's the other rub: when we looked for Padgett after the shooting, when the lights were turned on again, we found his chair deserted—overturned—and Padgett gone. A few seconds after we discovered this, he came out of the woods across the road, with Taylor guiding him. Are we to believe that Padgett, blind as he is, left his chair of his own accord, in the dark, and went across to the other side?"

I regarded him gravely. Caldwell's had always been an inquisitive mind.

"It's a cinch," he went on, when I made no reply, "that Taylor didn't drag him toward the bold, bad bandits; we both know that Taylor and the motor cop dashed over on their own hook, firing their revolvers. Just a point, you know," Clay yawned. "And I'm here to tell you that as long as I'm connected with this mess, I'm going to keep my eye on everybody."

"Suppose you ask Frank about it, while we're at *Eagle's Nest* today?" I suggested.

"OH, no. It may be that, though blind, the excitement got under his skin, and he simply took after Taylor and the officer. If there's any other explanation he may let it out today. Anyway, let's get going!"

Promptly at eleven-thirty, Clay and I arrived at *Eagle's Nest*, the estate which had been bequeathed to Padgett in the death-bed will of Sybil Dale, the unfortunate star whom he had hoped to make his wife.

Padgett's Japanese butler showed us into the library, where we found the blind novelist and his secretary, Taylor, going over what seemed to be a considerable stack of correspondence. As we entered, Taylor was reading some of it aloud from his seat behind a broad desk. Padgett, his head completely swathed in bandages, sat before a portable typewriter at one end of the desk, making what seemed to be notes.

Taylor directed us to seats, and Padgett, after a few conventionalities, ordered Taylor to shut the door.

"Now then, Caldwell," he said, "I am informed by Cassim this morning that Mr. Osborn confided some of the principal details of my problem to you last night?"

"Yes," Clay answered, "George told me several things that made my hair stand up on end, and begged me to stick to the ship."

"Will you?" Padgett asked, an eager note in his voice. "It would be a serious calamity if you declined to finish the direction of the picture at this stage of the production, for I am getting things in shape for the final unmasking of my enemy."

"I told George I would stand by," Clay said shortly, "and anyway, I've never broken a contract. However, I want every card laid on the table, Padgett; I don't care for half-way measures."

Padgett nodded his bandaged head, and launched into an account that was similar to the one I had given Clay, though, of course, more detailed. Padgett's story began with his infatuation for Sybil Dale, just as the novel of *The Scorpion* began with the infatuation of the novelist, Leslie Porter, for Lucille Ames. We had but to give the characters their true names.

Briefly, Padgett had soon discovered that Sybil Dale was the victim either of a dual personality, or of some sinister power which took possession of her at intervals and used her as a pawn. By virtue of his friendship for the Hindu mystic,

Ali Cassim, and his own knowledge concerning psychology, spiritualism, and occult science, Padgett had been able to satisfy himself that such was indeed the case. His findings had revealed, after an exhaustive investigation, that a human devil known as the "Scorpion" had picked Sybil Dale from obscurity because of her plasticity of mind, and had, by endowing her with a fortune, enabled her to win success as a star in motion-pictures.

"As you both know," Padgett continued, "Sybil caused this magnificent home, *Eagle's Nest*, to be built. Here she gave séances, in keeping with the rôle of mystic that had been forced upon her, and thus she was able to attract moneyed and credulous victims of the 'Scorpion' from the upper classes of Hollywood, to say nothing of luckless screen aspirants to whom *Eagle's Nest* was always—supposedly—a haven of sympathy and understanding.

"Just as I described in the novel, the 'Scorpion' reaped a huge harvest, managing to enslave many victims through mysticism, spiritism, or drugs. A cult he had organized, and which still exists—*The Sivanians*, or devil worshippers—numbered and now numbers among its members some of his most unfortunate victims, both living and dead. Yes," as Clay gave vent to an exclamation, "not only has he enslaved the living, but he has enslaved certain poor, unfortunate spirits—ghosts of Hollywood—who do his bidding. Sybil Dale committed suicide in the hope of obtaining release from her bondage, but her spirit is still struggling to throw off the shackles of this fiend. And thank God," Padgett exclaimed fervently, "the time draws near when the enemy—"

The telephone rang, and Taylor answered it. His features took on a pleased expression, and he handed the telephone to Padgett.

"Lucas, sir; and it's good news."

Padgett conferred with someone at the other end, his voice quivering with excitement; and at length he replaced the receiver.

"Our first thrust has been nothing less than a *coup*, gentlemen!" he exulted. "The police have raided the rendezvous of the cult, and have taken thirty prisoners, among them eleven half-crazed victims who have been advertised as missing for months! The 'Scorpion,' unfortunately, was not among them, but—" and he slapped the desk with the palm of his good hand, "we've got him on the run! And within twenty-four hours, he'll either forswear the Devil, or be my prisoner!"

We stared at him, no little surprised by this news.

"And now, Caldwell," Padgett chuckled, "I can at last draft the final sequence, save for the last few scenes. We will go ahead with the production of the picture, and—"

Suddenly Caldwell jumped to his feet with a hoarse cry.

"My God! Look—in the corner, Taylor!"

WE followed his horrified gaze, and saw, floating toward Caldwell from the shadows of a curtained niche, a shapeless, tenuous mass that I knew could be nothing other than the astral body of that fiend—the "Scorpion"! Swiftly, the thing reached Caldwell, and a faint blue haze seemed suddenly to fill the room. Clay gave a shudder, put his hand to his throat and pitched headlong, senseless, to the floor!

For a moment neither Taylor nor I could move a muscle. But Padgett, though blind, had heard Clayton Caldwell's body strike the carpet, and had heard Clay's horrified cry a moment before. With a muttered imprecation, he sprang to his feet, and felt his way across the room to an object that was covered with a black leather jacket.

I was but dimly aware of Padgett's movements, for I could not take my eyes from that monstrous, astral shape that now bent over the prone and inert form of Caldwell. Here was my best friend, poor Clay, lying helpless, unable to combat the misused occult powers of the "Scorpion"! There was no doubt in my mind that this astral shape was that of the arch fiend himself.



A dull rage consumed me, and served to dispel in some measure the lethargy that gripped my muscles. With a hoarse cry, I stepped forward, dropping to my knees and grasping Caldwell by the shoulders. Instantly, my body seemed charged with a pulsing, galvanic current that brought a numbing sensation to heart and brain; ghostly wisps of the tenuous astral form curved about my face and wrists like phantom tentacles, icy cold and unspeakably evil. I heard Taylor shouting at me to draw away.

But horrible as my experience was, one thought drove fear from my mind, and probably saved my sanity, if not my life: Caldwell's shoulders were moving—he was breathing; there was still hope—

"Clay!" I cried, pulling him to a sitting position. "Caldwell, this thing can't hurt you; come out of it, man—can you hear me, Clay?" I shouted, as his eyelids quivered slightly.

And then Padgett's voice was raised in a stern command: "Draw back, Osborn—hurry, or Caldwell is lost!"

I glanced in the direction of the blind novelist, and saw his groping fingers find the black leather covering that concealed the bulky object on the floor; saw him whisk the cover off, revealing a static machine.

"DO you hear me, Osborn?" Padgett cried, his hand finding an electric switch.

"Yes," I managed to answer, and with a violent effort, I removed my hands from Clayton's shoulders and drew back.

There was a click as Padgett twisted the button of the switch; the hum of an electric motor; the glass disks of the static machine began to revolve, and a spluttering, weaving line of violet-blue fire materialized between the brass balls of the contrivance.

Instantly, the astral form that hovered over Caldwell seemed to lengthen and start revolving in a ghostly, spiral movement; the faint blue haze that had filled the room faded abruptly, and the tenuous form began to disintegrate. But before it had utterly vanished, it moved swiftly downward, and seemed to pass through the floor.

"It's gone!" I choked, "through the floor!"

Padgett stumbled from the static machine, leaving it running.

"Is Caldwell alive?" he asked hoarsely.

Clay was still in the sitting position, breathing heavily, though his eyes were closed. I returned to him, lifting him bodily.

"He's alive, but seems unconscious," I announced, carrying the inert form of the director to a couch.

"Thank God!" Padgett exclaimed with emotion, groping his way to a chair. "Taylor! call up Cassim at once."

Taylor, his features ashen, his hands trembling, picked up the telephone and called a number, while I rubbed Caldwell's hands and squeezed them in an effort to restore him to consciousness.

"The boy says that Cassim left the house a few minutes ago," Taylor announced. "Wasn't he to call you before leaving for the studio?"

"Yes," Padgett said, a note of relief in his voice, "that means that he's on his way here—probably received some intimation of this latest thrust of the 'Scorpion.'" He laughed harshly. "Damn him! The monster had reason to know that he was powerless to strike me down, and he picked on Caldwell—a man who was not yet armed against his devilish forces. How is he now, Osborn?"

"Clay is still unconscious," I answered. "In Heaven's name, Padgett, can't a doctor be sent for?"

"No doctor would be able to help," Padgett said sadly. "Only the Hindu, Cassim, will know what to do. There is hope in the fact that Caldwell is still alive; he must be possessed of a remarkable constitution, and this fact will no doubt save his life in the end."

"In the end?" I echoed.

"Yes," Padgett's voice was cold and metallic, "hours or

days from now, when the crisis has passed—for if I am right, the accursed fiend whose astral shape was forced to quit this room because of my static machine, placed Caldwell in the grip of an ancient Chinese occult malady: *Tsyang-Chi*. Outwardly it is a state of coma; actually, it is something infinitely worse—the utter suspension of motor-impulses and of all thought; the gradual disintegration of the mind itself, unless intelligent and immediate steps are taken to prevent it."

I shuddered, exchanging horrified glances with Taylor.

"Then—this is a sort of trance?" Taylor asked.

"Yes," Padgett said grimly. "Induced by a species of oriental occult hypnotism. Taylor—get in touch with Miss Dean at once."

Taylor called the number of Elinor's hotel, and soon had her on the wire.

"Ask her if she is all right," Padgett directed.

Taylor did so.

"She says that she is," he reported, "and that she was about to leave for the studio. I caught her just as she was leaving the hotel."

"Tell her to remain at the hotel this afternoon; that I'll call her later, and let her know whether we'll work today or not."

Taylor communicated this, but announced at length:

"She wants confirmation—wants you to talk to her, Osborn."

Padgett chuckled drily.

"Bless her heart! She isn't taking anything for granted, after her experiences with the 'Scorpion.' Talk to her, George."

I took the telephone, assuring Elinor that it was Arthur Taylor who had just talked to her.

"But, oh, George," she murmured, "what has happened? I've had a feeling of impending disaster for the past half hour."

I hesitated.

"The 'Scorpion' has made another move, dear," I said. "It may be nothing serious—"

"Go ahead and tell her," Padgett broke in resignedly, "but don't tell her too much—there's no use frightening her."

"It's Caldwell," I said. "He's in a sort of trance, but we have every hope of getting him out of it. Now don't worry, Elinor," as she uttered an exclamation of horror, "Padgett and Cassim will do everything that it is possible to do—"

"Meanwhile," interposed Padgett, "she is to stay close to her apartment, and keep her radio going, until I communicate with her."

I communicated this, and she acquiesced, being aware that the radio would set up sound and other vibrations to prevent any possible occult thrusts the 'Scorpion' might attempt against her. She begged me to be careful, and I assured her that I would be.

WHEN I hung up, I saw that Taylor was peering out the window, and following his gaze, I saw Cassim's long black sedan entering the driveway.

In a few moments, the Hindu mystic entered the library, accompanied by the elderly Frenchwoman whom I knew to be Madame Fennier, a clairvoyant medium who was associated with his work.

Padgett explained what had occurred, while the Hindu regarded the inert form of Caldwell with narrowed eyes, his lean, dusky features grim.

"You are right, Frank," Cassim replied to Padgett's diagnosis, feeling Caldwell's pulse and flexing the muscles of his right arm. "*Tsyang-Chi*—in an advanced state. I had a premonition regarding this, but unfortunately, not in time to prevent it. However—"

He raised one of Caldwell's eyelids, and made several passes, as if in the attempt to call Caldwell back to consciousness. But there was no response.

"Bad; it looks bad," he muttered, "but we'll get him out of

it eventually, though it may take days." He pulled the bell cord for the butler. "Can Caldwell be moved to a guest-room right away?"

"Of course," Padgett said. "If Taylor and Osborn will carry him up."

"We can do that?" Taylor said, leaving the desk. "What room would be best?"

"How about that, Cassim?" asked Padgett. "There's the one you occupied once, in the south wing."

"It will answer the purpose," Cassim said shortly. "Get him up there, gentlemen, and undress him and put him to bed. Madame Fennier," to his medium, "it is as I feared; you will have to act as Mr. Caldwell's nurse."

She inclined her head. Padgett's Japanese butler entered, and Cassim directed him to call in his negro chauffeur.

"Now just a minute," he said, as Taylor and I started to lift Caldwell from the couch. "I want to make a test, and I can do it here just as well. Shut off that static machine, Taylor, if you please—just turn the switch."

TAYLOR did so, and the glass disks ceased their revolutions, while the line of violet-blue fire between the brass knobs died out. And then Cassim did a peculiar thing: he extracted a pocket lighter from his coat, and snapping on the flame, he raised Caldwell's left eyelid, holding the light within some five inches of the eye for a full minute. There was no reaction, as far as I could tell, and Cassim shrugged, extinguished the lighter and put it away.

The negro chauffeur entered, regarding his employer expectantly.

"Henry," Cassim addressed him, "I want you to drive home right away, and bring me that alligator case on the floor of my wardrobe."

"Yes suh," Henry replied. "The one with the electric ray machine in it?"

"Right. And tell my boy, Rab, that I have 'gone out of the city.' He knows, and you know, what that means. Now on your way, and hurry back with that case."

The negro bowed and took his departure.

"We will try electric stimuli first," Cassim explained, "and if that fails, we will combine electro-therapy with occult suasion. Caldwell's trance is super-induced, and without internal cause. His conscious mind is in abeyance, and submerged to a great extent. But vitality is present to an encouraging degree, though it would rapidly diminish if we took no steps to counteract this condition."

"Then it may be days before he is restored to normal consciousness?" I asked anxiously.

Cassim nodded.

"Yes. And of course this means that there is little hope of Caldwell's continuing as director, if the film version of *The Scorpion* is to be completed on schedule."

"It must be completed, Cassim," Padgett interposed vehemently. "It would be fatal to postpone activities very long." His head turned toward me, and I could almost fancy that his blinded eyes could see me through the bandages, so acute was his sense of direction.

"Osborn," he exclaimed, "you have been in pictures for a number of years; you're thoroughly familiar with *The Scorpion*, and are in complete sympathy with our cause. Will you accept the task of directing the rest of the picture?"

I hardly knew what to say; Caldwell's condition was a severe blow to me, and my chief anxiety was his recovery. I said as much.

"Naturally," Padgett replied. "But Cassim will tell you that there are important psychic reasons why the production must continue. The matter is simply this: my whole purpose in filming the story has been to force the real 'Scorpion' to betray himself, which he has almost done, and which he will eventually do by an unwary and desperate move. It all comes to this, Osborn: by going ahead with the production, we keep certain psychic forces alive, bringing nearer the time when the 'Scorpion' will disclose himself. At the same

time we not only lessen the evil power that now holds Caldwell in its spell, but hasten his recovery. Am I right, Cassim?"

"Absolutely," the Hindu replied without hesitation. "Everything we can do to force the enemy to dissipate or diffuse his evil energies is bound to speed Caldwell's recovery, as well as make his recovery more certain."

"Then," I said, "I'll take up where Clay left off—and finish the picture. You can arrange matters with Weinberg and Rosenthal," I concluded, referring to the heads of the Summit Studio.

Padgett expressed his appreciation.

"Can you start shooting at three, say, this afternoon?" he asked. "Cassim doesn't appear in the current sequence."

Caldwell was to have started work at one, and a glance at my watch revealed that it was twelve-twenty.

"Yes," I agreed. "That gives us a little over two hours. Better get in touch with Weinberg, then, and explain matters."

Padgett called the studio manager, and the matter was arranged, after considerable talk. It was explained that Caldwell had been taken ill, and that I was to replace him, with an increase in salary, effective at once.

"That's settled," Padgett said with relief, replacing the receiver. "We can notify Miss Dean later on, in time for her to reach the studio—"

"I'll pick her up after leaving here," I interposed. "I may as well make it clear to you all that I love Elinor, and would never forgive myself if the 'Scorpion' got her in his clutches. By the way, Cassim," I addressed the Hindu mystic, "wasn't Madame Fennier to join Elinor at her hotel this evening, to begin sharing her apartment as a companion?"

Cassim inclined his head gravely.

"You anticipate me, my dear Osborn," he said. "Of course different arrangements must be made now, owing to the fact that Madame Fennier is to remain here as Caldwell's nurse—"

"I have it!" Padgett cut in. "There is no reason why Elinor can't be my guest here, and that goes for you, too, Osborn, for then we could keep in closer touch. There are seven guest rooms available, and I can get extra servants easily enough."

The plan was approved, and I promised to notify Elinor and help her move what effects she would require.

We carried poor Clay upstairs, and put him to bed. By that time, Cassim's chauffeur returned with the electrostatic machine, and the Hindu set the contrivance up on a table by the bed, attaching the electric terminals, one to Caldwell's head, and the other to one foot.

The relaxed muscles responded instantly to the stimuli, but there was no return to consciousness. I was considerably concerned, for during the time that had elapsed since Caldwell had been stricken, his breathing had all but ceased, and his heart action was so slight as to be scarcely detected.

BUT Cassim assured us that he was not dead, and the response of Caldwell's muscles reassured me. Cassim impressed us as knowing what he was about, and I later learned that at one time he had been the chief physician and surgeon to none other than the Prince of the Indian province of Bengal, a ruler who had not been blind to the benefits of modern medical science.

"Faradization—" Cassim explained, "that is, electrical treatment, such as I am using—will sometimes rouse a patient from a trance that is so profound as to seem almost death-like. The treatment must be given frequently, and over a long period, before results can be expected."

He then took from the case an instrument which was fitted with lenses—an ophthalmoscope, he termed it.

"The room must be darkened, now," he said, "before I can make another scientific test. I'll also need an electric extension cord and a bright light—say a sixty-watt lamp."

Padgett issued instructions to the Jap to bring the neces-

sary equipment, while Taylor and I lowered the shades of the room. The servant returned with the cord and the bulb, which Cassim connected so that the light was above Caldwell's head, and somewhat behind it. The other lights were turned off, and the Hindu knelt at the bed, fitting the instrument to his eye, and raising Caldwell's left eyelid.

For several moments he studied the eye at close range, and then asked me to turn on the electrostatic machine and hold Caldwell's head so that it wouldn't move under the electric stimuli. Continuing his examination under these conditions—difficult because of the quivering of Caldwell's muscles—Cassim gave a grunt of satisfaction.

"All right, Osborn; shut off the machine," he directed.

I did so, and Cassim, after an adjustment of his instrument, resumed his operation. It was a strange sight, to see this dusky and turbaned mystic perform what was undoubtedly an extremely delicate examination. But there was no doubt that he knew what he was about.

At length he straightened up, ordering the shades to be raised.

"GENTLEMEN," he announced gravely, "I am not licensed to practice ophthalmoscopy, or any other form of medical science, in this country. In this case, however, the laws do not concern me, for a human life—worse, a human mind—is at stake. I feel confident in saying that there is not a specialist in this country, or for that matter, in the world, who could cope with this situation without a profound knowledge of occult science. It happens that fate has qualified me to approach this case; that I am peculiarly fitted to find remedies, and achieve a cure—"

"Then in Heaven's name," I exclaimed, too overwhelmed by Caldwell's condition to hold my peace any longer, "forget laws and ethics, and save Clay!"

Cassim regarded me gravely, his dusky features troubled. "You don't know what you ask, Osborn," he said. "Not only am I without license to practice in America, but I am a Hindu—a British subject. However, I would face extradition, the penitentiary, even, rather than abandon this unfortunate man in his present extremity."

His decision was made; what it had cost him, only he knew. I breathed a sigh of relief, and Padgett remarked:

"You are in my home, Cassim, and my house is my castle, as the saying goes. I know that none of us has any reason to criticize your efforts. Am I right, gentlemen?"

I replied in the affirmative, but Taylor hesitated. He and the Hindu exchanged glances, and I saw that Taylor's square-cut features had clouded. Instantly my suspicions were aroused. Taylor's status had long bothered me. Though he was nominally Padgett's secretary, and personnel manager of the *Scorpion* Production unit, he exuded an authority out of keeping with these minor offices.

"How about you, Taylor?" Padgett prompted fretfully.

Taylor shrugged, and out of the corner of my eye I saw him dart Cassim a covert wink.

"Me?" he answered. "Why bother about me, Mr. Padgett?"

There was a trace of sarcasm in his tone, as well as in the reply itself. I looked for Padgett to make some angry retort, which in my opinion would have been justified, for the man was but an employee. Yet Padgett responded evenly:

"It is you whom I am most anxious about."

I could hardly believe my senses. What was Taylor to the blind author-director? What, indeed, was Taylor to Cassim—as betrayed by the wink I had detected? My mind worked swiftly. There was some secret here, some complication of which I had not been informed. What lay behind these veiled relationships? *Who was Taylor?*

*What desperate measures will Ali Cassim resort to? Science will make a brave stand against the Powers of Darkness that have poor Clayton Caldwell in their grip—but can you guess the outcome? Perhaps this is the moment you have been waiting for—the moment when that fiend, the "Scorpion," will betray himself! You'll never know a greater thrill than that which awaits you in the final instalment of this amazing tale of glamorous Hollywood. It will appear in the September number of GHOST STORIES, on sale at all news stands August 23rd. Don't miss it!*

## The Invisible Rider

A True Story by Claude E. Freeland

THIS incident happened when I was employed as early night telegraph operator in the little California town of Merced.

It was extremely hot that night. I had finished my work and was preparing to lock up, when two of my acquaintances came in and proposed a swim.

Swim! I fairly leaped at the suggestion, and at the stroke of twelve I closed the office, and off we started.

We walked past the edge of town, out along an extremely dusty road for perhaps half a mile before we reached the "swimmin' hole."

For about an hour we splashed away, diving, swimming and yelling. Then we clambered out and began to dress. It was while thus engaged that we heard a horse come galloping down the road as though urged on by a frantic rider. Half clad, we all dashed out to see this galloping steed and learn the reason for such haste.

As we strained our eyes the thundering hoofs resounded mightily on the dusty road. The noise grew louder and louder, reaching a crescendo when abreast of us. I heard—but try as I would, I could see nothing! Yet the moon shone clearly from across the fields, lighting up the road quite plainly. Gradually the hoofbeats died out in the distance.

One of my companions gave an exclamation, but beyond this we maintained silence as we finished dressing.

On our way back to town I stopped and, facing the others, asked them if they had seen that horse and rider. They admitted they had not, but one of them, Bob, related a story he had often heard, though it was new to me.

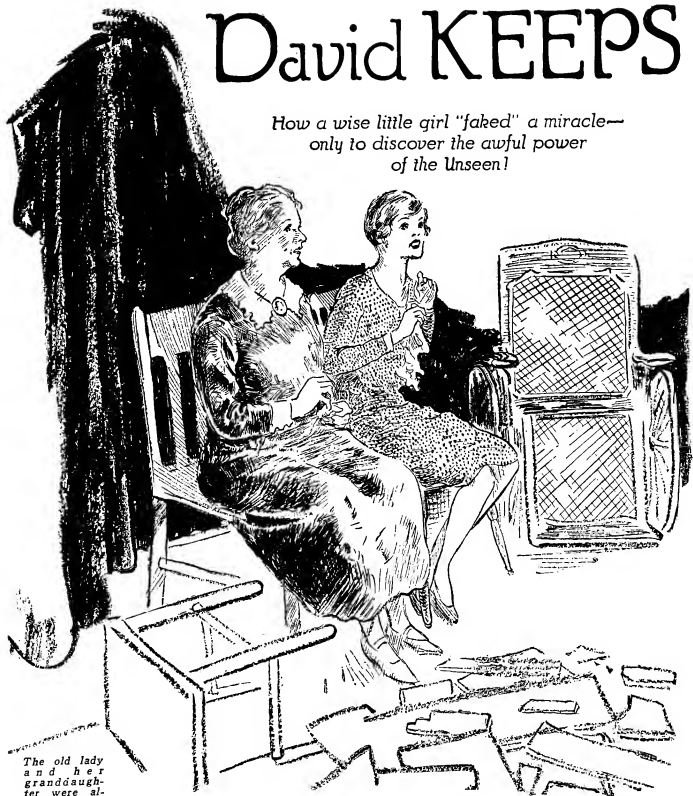
It seems that many years before, a horse-drawn stage had traveled this road, usually carrying few passengers but large deposits of cash. For this reason it was easy prey for highwaymen. On one occasion the stage was attacked at a point some three miles above where we had been swimming. Its only passenger was a cripple. The driver, as a precaution, had strapped the money to the harness of one of the horses. When the attack came he slashed the horse loose, leaped on its back and, knowing the bandits would not harm a crippled passenger, attempted to get to town. He was, of course, overtaken, and both he and his horse were shot down.

The lone passenger, unharmed, told of the heroic driver's tragic fate.

Bob declared that many people had mentioned hearing the invisible rider, but previously he had not given the tale much credence and had almost forgotten it.

# David KEEPS

*How a wise little girl "faked" a miracle—  
only to discover the awful power  
of the Unseen!*



*The old lady  
and her  
granddaughter  
were al-  
most hysteri-  
cal*

I'm sure I wouldn't blame anyone for not believing this story. I know I would not have believed it myself if anyone had told it to me a few years ago. And yet, the events I am about to relate had such a drastic effect upon my entire life that I feel I must write them down.

One of the most amazing things about the whole experience is the fact that it should have happened to me—hard-boiled, wise little Thelma Johnson—of all people! Why, I hadn't a vestige of belief in anything supernatural. Far from it. My mother died when I was only three years old, and from then until I was seventeen I traveled about the country with my father's carnival and medicine show. Before I had learned to read or write, I knew every "sucker

game" employed in such an enterprise, knew the answer to every "miracle" of the magician. When most kids of my age were starting to school, I was toe-dancing before Pop's tent to attract the crowds that Chick O'Brien, the barker, harangued inside to see "the greatest exhibit of magic and sorcery ever shown in this part of the world."

Pop was good, too. He did most of the stuff the better-known magicians did, and his audiences always left the tent wide-eyed with wonder. As I grew older, I changed from toe-dancing to Oriental or acrobatic—under the tutelage of old Ma Schlosky, who had the hot dog concession and used to be a dancer herself—and I took part in Pop's act, as well. I was at one time the girl who disappeared from inside the scaled cabinet; at another, the girl who, hypnotized, lay

# His WORD

By  
THELMA  
JOHNSON



PAGE  
TROTTER

*Like a creature possessed, I danced to the rhythm of those unseen drums—inside the ring of green flames!*

suspended in mid-air; and finally, that amazing phenomenon, who, before the audience's very eyes, was placed in a coffin, feet showing at one end, head at the other, and then was sawed in two. Inevitably, of course, I had a profound contempt for the credulous layman we called the "Sucker." As for religion, and the hereafter, such things interested me not at all. I believed only what I actually experienced—and not always that. All of which, as I said, makes the experience I am about to relate just so much more amazing.

When the story opens, I was twenty. Pop had been dead for three years; the carnival was a thing of the past; and I was almost broke. I had used what money Pop left me to get some more education, and had only succeeded in con-

vincing myself that I was all wrong. Book-learning was not for me. My knowledge would have to come from my contacts with life, as it had in the past. When Chick O'Brien, who had always been in love with me, asked me for about the two-

hundredth time to marry him, I was almost in low enough spirits to consent—almost, but not quite. Instead, I stalled. Briefly, it was this: He had taken an apartment, in the better section of a big mid-western city, under the name of "Professor Obrion." Then he let it be known, in the right quarters, that the "professor" was a student of the occult; that he read the stars, held séances, was able to foretell events, to read the past, the present and the future; that he

had even been known to effect really remarkable cures.

Oh, the "professor" was not commercial—far from it! So engrossed was he in his own private researches that it was most difficult to reach him. But occasionally—very occasionally—when someone had been able to secure his interest, to convince him that he or she was desperately in need, and worthy of his help, he had been known to drop his own work entirely and direct all his energies and powers toward helping the fortunate suppliant. In such instances, of course, his fees were enormous. But, after all, was that not as it should be?

"We've been playing a piker's game all these years, Thelma," he told me solemnly. "Now we're going to do the thing in an exclusive way. If it goes at all, it'll go big—and we'll be in the money. Are you game?"

I looked him over, studying the carefully cultivated new personality he had acquired—the pince-nez, the Vandyke beard, the quiet, faultlessly-cut clothes—and I could imagine a lot of people falling for his line. Then I looked about at the perfectly appointed apartment ("Done by one of these interior decorators," he told me proudly) and right there and then I capitulated.

"You're on, Chick," I told him. "I'll join the show." And we shook on it.

WELL, the racket went better than either of us dreamed it would. It's funny the way news travels. It wasn't any time before people began looking us up, begging the "professor" to help them out of some difficulty or other. But Chick would consider only the cream of the lot.

It was my job to act as reception clerk and secretary—among other things. I had to interview the applicants and discourage them as much as possible, thereby making them crazier than ever to get to the "professor." Incidentally, during the interview, I always found out as much about them as possible. Then Chick would investigate them, and if he decided to take them on, we would decide what method to use on them—and what use we would make of the information they had let slip to me. Then I would send for them, telling them the "professor" had decided to interview them, and from then on, the game started.

It wasn't long before we had quite a number of people who never undertook anything important without having the "professor" read the stars for them, and an almost equally large group who consulted the "spirits" about every important move they were going to make. We did all the usual stunts at our séances; I'd even go into a trance, on occasion, and pretend I was controlled by someone from the other world. Oh, I was good—if I do say it myself! I put on a thoroughly convincing act, and, backed by the "professor's" solemn and scholarly dignity, the performance went over big—so big that my head was way up in the clouds.

We had been practicing successfully for over a year, and at Chick's insistence I had about decided to marry him, when the experience I have been leading up to occurred.

I had been out on an errand, I remember, leaving Chick in charge at the apartment. When I returned, I found him all steamed up.

"Caught a big fish, while you were away," he told me jubilantly.

"Meaning?" I countered.

"Ella Tompkins."

"Whoever that may be!"

"You know the old Tompkins house, next to the Telephone Building—the one old residence left in the downtown section?"

"Well? What about it?"

"Gee, you're dumb! The Tompkins are one of the city's oldest families. The old lady is worth oodles of money—and eccentric as the old Harry. Won't move out of the old family home in spite of the fact that all the other best families have gone over to the North Side."

"So! And what does the old girl want you to do for her?"

"Well, it seems she had a granddaughter who was on the road to becoming a great singer—the Metropolitan was going to give her a chance—when her throat went floozy. Paralyzed—due to shock of some sort. The old dame has had her everywhere for treatments, but so far no one has been able to help her any. She said she had heard about me and the wonderful cures I have effected, and wants me to try to cure her Genevieve."

"Good! What's the treatment to be?"

"Well, I've been thinking. . . . It will have to be a séance, but most of our usual stuff will have to be cut out—it wouldn't get across with these babies. We'll have to be very simple and dignified and impressive. Now—here's what I thought:

"Fortunately, they haven't seen you. We'll have you brought in at the first séance we hold. You'll be a dancer who has been injured by a fall, some time back. You'll be rolled in, in a wheel chair, paralyzed. And that first séance, you'll be cured. That's to prove to them that I actually can effect cures, see? The whole idea is to keep them coming back for more. I told them that the case might prove very difficult, but that I would do my best. I said I would only charge them for the time I actually spent with them—say, five hundred dollars a séance. Of course, I said, we might effect a cure the very first time, or we might have to try many times. And—would you believe it—the old lady never batted an eyelid. Said she knew I would do everything in my power, and she was deeply grateful for my interest.

"Kid, we're going to clean up at least ten grand on this outfit. We'll have to make each session so provocative they'll be convinced that next time sure the cure will be made. It will take some working out, but we can do it."

"Yes—but the cure? It seems sort of low to lead the poor things on, when we know darned well we can't cure the girl. It's not like taking people's money just for advice."

"Oh, you make me tired! They've been everywhere else, haven't they? And these

other birds have taken their money and given them nothing, haven't they? If we don't get it, someone else will. If the girl could have been cured, she would have been, long before this. And if they're fools enough to go on throwing away their money—and they have plenty of it to throw—we might as well be getting it as the next guy."

I thought that over, and had to agree with him; but just the same, I didn't like the job, right from the first. However, ten thousand dollars looked like a lot of money to me, and I needed money. Therefore, in spite of my distaste for the affair, I went on and helped Chick plan that first séance.

Nor did I like the situation any better after meeting little Mrs. Tompkins and her granddaughter, Genevieve De Witt. They were charming, well-bred, sincere people, with a pathetic belief in the "professor's" ability to help them. And the way they accepted me—though I knew my presence disconcerted them—the kindness and sympathy they showed me, believing me to be in trouble, made me feel like a dirty dog.

I was there waiting for them when they arrived—nicely made up to look wan and weak, in my wheel chair. Chick explained that I had been brought to him for treatment, by



someone he had helped; that I had had an accident, while dancing, and was paralyzed from the waist down; and that he had been unable to take me on, because he was so busy. However, he thought that perhaps, since our cases were so similar, they might be willing to let me attend their "treatments" in the hope that I, too, might derive some benefit from them.

"Of course I have made it plain to Miss Johnson that unless you are perfectly willing to have her, she cannot stay," he ended.

A look of the deepest sympathy crossed the face of little Mrs. Tompkins.

"SUPPOSE you tell us something about yourself," she said quietly. "Then we can decide."

That was my cue to hand her a good sob story, but I could only murmur:

"It—it will mean so much to me." The look of compassion in her eyes made me choke up and want to tear out of the room, to warn her that she was being cheated. Chick immediately took control of the situation by holding my hand, as though to reassure me—actually, I thought he would break my fingers, so fierce was his grip—and saying:

"Miss Johnson finds it difficult to talk about the situation. You see, it is almost a matter of life and death with her. She made her living by her dancing, and since the accident, of course, she has been unable to work. It has been very hard."

"Poor child!" murmured Mrs. Tompkins.

"Of course you must stay and take the treatments with me," said the De Witt girl, in her husky, whispery voice. "I know you will be helped, if I am—if it is possible to be helped by the professor's treatments."

"Thank — thank you, so much!" I managed to say, real tears brimming up in my eyes. These people, in their quiet black attire, certainly got under my skin as no one ever had before. They were so sincere, so simple, such thoroughbreds. I began to doubt my ability to play my part. It was certainly a new sensation.

Always sensitive to my moods, Chick must have realized my uncertainty, for he immediately swung into action.

"Well, since that's all settled," he said briskly, "let's start, shall we? Will you and your granddaughter step right this way, Mrs. Tompkins?"

He led the way down the hall to the séance room. When he returned, there was a steely look in his eyes, and he spoke quietly, but in no uncertain terms.

"What in hell's the matter with you?" he demanded. "Going soft on me?"

"I—I don't like this, Chick," I whispered.

"Well—you're in it, and you'd better like it. I didn't think I'd live to see the day when you'd fall down on a game. Your father would be proud of you—"

"Leave my father out of this!" I snapped, realizing full

well that he was right; that Pop would agree with him absolutely. Then, for the first time in my life I experienced a pang of shame at my father's mode of life—a reaction followed almost instantly by a feeling of horror that I could be so disloyal to his memory. Here was I, Bill Johnson's kid, breaking his first law—welching on a pal, going soft on a job! If he had been alive, he'd have beaten me up—then wept over the poor weakling that was his daughter. Gosh! No wonder Chick was sore. In a sort of panic I grabbed his hand.

"Chick—Chick, I'm terribly sorry. I don't know what struck me. Please forgive me," I pleaded. "I'll be all right now—you'll see!"

"Well—all right."

His eyes still frigid, he wheeled me down the hall, and the séance started. All during the experience, I had but one thought—to make good with Chick.

And what a performance we put on!

The heavily draped room was very dimly lighted when we entered, and already the shadowy forms of Mrs. Tompkins and her granddaughter were seated at the table in the center of the floor. Chick wheeled my chair over to them and seated himself next to me.

"Now then," he began, "will you all place your hands lightly on the table?"

We did as directed and sat for a time in silence. Then he spoke again:

"Spirits, are you there?"

Nothing happened, and we continued to wait. From time to time Chick repeated his question:

"Spirits, are you there?"

At last we felt a tremor run through the table and I heard a gasp from Miss Tompkins on my right. Then the corner between Chick and me lifted and dropped with a resounding thwack.

"Oh, my! What's that?" trilled the little old lady.

"Silence, please," whispered the "professor." Then, louder: "Is there a friendly spirit in this room?" The table bounced about uncertainly, then settled down again. "Tap once for

'No', three times for 'Yes'." said Chick. Immediately the table leg rose and fell three times, with heavy thuds.

"Spirit, we need your help. Answer. Will you help us?" Again three knocks.

"Two of our number, Spirit, are afflicted by illness—by paralysis. All earthly means have failed to cure them. They now turn to the all-knowing dead for help. Spirit, can you cure them?"

This time there was only one short rap.

"No, the Spirit says it cannot cure them. Spirit, will you tell us who you are—spell out your name?"

Three enthusiastic raps this time.

"All right, start."

A series of raps commenced, at each of which, Chick called out a letter, "A, b, c, d—" There came a pause.

"Is 'D' the first letter?"

## "I'll Come Back to Haunt You!"

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Three raps, then a short silence followed by one rap.

"One rap—a. Go on. D-a—"

The table continued until it had spelled out the word "David" and started on the "T" of the surname.

"It's David—it's my husband!" gasped Mrs. Tompkins, too excited to remember the professor's admonition of silence.

"Is it David Tompkins, husband of Ella Tompkins?" inquired Chick, solemnly.

The table almost leapt from the floor, so enthusiastic was its Yes.

"Oh, dear! Let me talk to him."

For fully ten minutes the séance was held up while the little old lady talked to her husband—or thought she did—asking questions, like: "Are you happy?" and "Is there really a hereafter?" Then she inquired: "Is Hesther, our dear daughter, there with you?"

"Yes," rapped the table.

"Can I speak to her?"

"No." Decidedly.

**T**HIS baffled her for a moment, and during her silence Chick seized the opportunity to take control once more.

"David Tompkins, Hesther's daughter Genevieve—your granddaughter—is in desperate need of your help. Can you help her?"

"Yes," thumped the table.

"And will you help our friend, Thelma Johnson?"

"Yes."

Suddenly the table went limp under our hands and the professor seemed unable to budge it. After half a dozen futile demands of "Spirit, are you there?" and "David Tompkins, are you still in this room?" Chick sat back.

"He has evidently gone. But he said he would help us!"

This was my cue to beg the "professor" to try just once more, but I didn't get a chance.

"If David said he'd do a thing, he always did it." His widow's voice rang with pride and confidence. "We'd better just wait right here. I know he'll be back."

"Well—" Chick acquiesced with apparent reluctance.

Once again we placed our hands on the table and waited, this time in silence. Then, suddenly, the surface under our hands seemed to leap into life. It trembled violently, then began to move about from side to side.

"David Tompkins, are you there?" demanded Chick's most sepulchral voice.

Instantly the table dropped back with a thud.

"David Tompkins is not there. Is there another spirit in this room?"

"Yes," thumped the table.

"Hesther!" breathed Mrs. Tompkins.

"Will you spell out your name for us?"

Yes, it would. It began to spell and Chick sounded off the letters.

"M-u-g-w-a-u-m-p-u-m. Mug Waumpum. Is that your name?"

"Yes."

"Who are you?"

"M-e-d-i-c-i-n-e-m-a-n—Medicine Man? Are you an Indian Medicine Man?"

"Yes."

"Did David Tompkins send you to us?"

"Yes."

"Can you cure these two girls?"

"Yes."

"How?"

This time the table actually did leap from the floor and started for the door. I released my hold, but at Chick's whispered, "Keep your hands on it," the others rose from their chairs and moved across the room with it. Suddenly there was a crash and a stifled scream, as the table shattered to pieces on the floor.

"Don't be afraid, it's all right," Chick's voice reassured

them. "Get back to your seats—and keep perfectly still!"

The almost hysterical women obeyed, but the "professor" did not accompany them. For a few seconds he was strangely still.

"Professor," I called out. "Professor!"

There was no answer but a faint sound as of thunder—or drums.

"What's the matter? What's that?" One of the women whispered, and almost instantly Chick's voice came to us, in accents of terror.

"No! No! Go away! No, I say!" He was moving nearer to us—the sound of his heavy breathing was distinctly audible—and as he came, the tom-tom beating of drums sounded louder and louder. By now both women were too thoroughly frightened to utter a sound.

As he advanced into the circle of dim light in which we three sat huddled, he looked for all the world like an old Indian. He had wrapped the table cover about him, like a blanket, and in the semi-darkness his rumpled hair and stooping, tottering gait, completed the illusion.

Straight toward me he came, muttering broken words. Then his voice grew louder and he began to chant, in the harsh guttural tongue of the Indians. (We had once had a troupe of Navajos with our show and Chick had learned to pow-wow with them in their own language. The training was standing him in good stead now.) Straight toward me he came, still chanting, and laid his hands on my head. I let out a shriek. At this the drums sounded all about us like thunder and his hands began to make hypnotic passes over my face. . . .

Then slowly, slowly, he moved back from me, still chanting, and as he did so I rose bit by bit, until I was standing, tottering but upright, on my feet. The women beside me gasped, and the drums beat faster. Then the "professor," hands still stretched hypnotically toward me, stepped back, little by little, and I followed, as though under a spell. When I was well away from the others, he swooped, suddenly, and swiftly drew a circle about me on the floor—a circle which, next moment, became a blaze of unearthly green light.

Slowly, at first, as though still under a spell, I began to dance—the old, Oriental dance of the medicine-show days. Then, little by little, I increased the pace. Finally, like a creature possessed, I danced to the rhythm of those unseen drums—inside the ring of green flames!

The old lady and her granddaughter were almost hysterical.

Chick had withdrawn into the shadows and stood with arms crossed, Indian fashion, under his shawl, looking off into space with eyes apparently unseeing. The circle of green lights in which I had been moving, was gradually dying out, and as the last bit of unearthly-looking incandescence flickered out, the "professor" uttered a groan and collapsed in a heap upon the floor.

**I**NSTANTLY the two women, who all this time had been sitting, apparently spellbound by the strange happenings, were on their feet.

"Something dreadful has happened!" gasped Miss De Witt, "Oh, dear, if only we could turn on some more light!"

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear!" groaned her grandmother. "What can we do?"

I stood swaying, my hand to my head, as though coming back to consciousness.

"What—what happened?" I gasped.

"You're—you're cured—miraculously!" came from Miss De Witt, breathlessly. "But the professor—something terrible has happened to him. We must do something. Oh, dear!" wringing her hands, "I don't know what to do—"

"He's—he's coming to," panted the little old lady, who had been bending over him, chafing his hands. The next moment Chick gave a faint groan, opened his eyes, and sat up,



holding his head. Honestly, he almost frightened me. "Oh, my head!" he groaned. "My head!" Then, after a long shudder: "Tell me—what happened? What did I do? I—I felt someone battling for the control of my will—just after the table crashed—and after that, nothing, until I came to, here on the floor. Who was it? Was it control—by some spirit? Please tell me."

"It was that Indian Medicine Man," I told him, trying to sound thrilled, "and he cured me!"

"Oh, wasn't it too wonderful!" Mrs. Tompkins began to sob hysterically. "I've never been so shaken in my life," she cried. "Never!"

"Oh, how very wonderful! I'm so glad for you, my dear," the "professor" murmured, weakly. "And Miss DeWitt—didn't he help her?"

"No—no," Mrs. Tompkins had checked her weeping as suddenly as it had started. "But if he could cure Miss Johnson today, he'll surely help Genevieve next time. Wasn't he sent by my David, and didn't David promise to help them both? David would have him help Miss Johnson, first—as our guest; he had such a sense of chivalry! Oh, my dears, I have no doubt, after what has happened in this room to-night, that our troubles are over. Genevieve is as good as cured, this very moment. Don't you feel it, too, my dear?" turning to her granddaughter.

"YES—oh yes! After what has happened to Miss Johnson before our very eyes, I'm convinced that at last we are on the right track," answered the girl solemnly in her odd voice. "When can we hold another séance, professor?"

"Not for a little while, I'm afraid. I'll have to let you know," he answered wearily, as though completely exhausted. "I have been in these trances before—not very often, but frequently enough so that I know what the after-effects will be. They are fearfully exhausting. And not until I have completely recovered, will it be safe to subject myself again to the strain. That is why," he concluded, "I cannot do more of this sort of work, much as I would like to be of service more often."

"I understand, professor. And I want to tell you again how very grateful my granddaughter and I both are for this wonderful communication." Little Mrs. Tompkins was almost in tears again, and Genevieve's voice, as she added her fervent, "Yes, indeed," was none too steady.

"And now, my dears, we must leave, and let the professor rest. Are you coming our way, Miss Johnson? We go downtown."

"Thank you, no. My friend is to call for me," I told the little woman. "I'll just wait in the reception room until he gets here."

Chick dragged himself up from the floor and walked to the door with us. He did, indeed, manage to look pale and haggard as he bade us a swift good-night and passed into a room beyond, with a brief, "You'll excuse me, I know."

"The dear man! It's beautiful the way he consents to spend his strength in such a noble work," murmured Mrs. Tompkins. "And you, dear—" turning to me, "I'm so very happy for you."

"And I—I can hardly believe what has happened," I answered.

"The professor has explained to you, of course, that you must not tell about what happens here," she admonished me. "It would give him unwelcome publicity—"

"Yes, I understand," I told her, wanting to laugh or cry—I didn't know which—at her seriousness.

"I want to talk with you some more, my dear," she went on. "This experience has drawn us very close together. Won't you let us give you tea, in a day or two, when you are entirely over the strain of all this, and used to being quite yourself again?"

"That would be lovely," I told her.

"Shall we say Thursday afternoon, then?"

"Thursday. And your address?"

She fumbled for a card which she handed me, then they were gone.

To tell the truth, I had no intention of keeping that appointment, but Chick insisted and I went, simply to keep peace. Chick was still sore at me, for weakening on him before the séance, and I didn't blame him much—that is, some of the time I didn't. I seemed to be running around in circles, emotionally.

There were times when I felt a terrific distaste for the Tompkins racket. So much so that I considered every way out, from leaving Chick to handle the affair himself, to going to the two women and confessing all. Then a feeling of self-contempt would set in and I would hate myself for even thinking of welching on my partner. In the end, my father's training told, though. Chick was my pal; I had agreed to go into this racket with him, and I must therefore see it through. Besides, as he said, the old lady had plenty of money to blow, and if we didn't get it, someone else must assuredly would.

So, at the appointed time, I called at the old Tompkins mansion. And what a relic of a place it was! Dingy and dusty and furnished but sparsely, in true mid-Victorian style—red plush hangings, flowered wallpaper and all.

To my surprise Mrs. Tompkins herself opened the front door for me and led the way into what she termed the "parlor." Tea was already set before the meager fire that crackled in the grate, and I found myself shivering with the damp chill of the place. As she poured my tea, the little old lady apologized for the absence of her granddaughter, explaining that she had been called away on business but might get back before I left. Then we settled down to discussing the subject nearest her heart—the cure of Genevieve. It was amazing to me how thoroughly sure she was that the girl would be cured at the next séance just as she believed I had been cured at the last one.

"It seems so remarkable," she said, "that fate should have sent you two girls to the professor at the same time, since your cases are so similar. I gather that your whole future existence—financially, I mean—depended upon your being cured—just as ours depends upon Genevieve's recovering her voice."

"With me—yes," I stammered, a sudden cold fear clutching at my heart. "But you—"

"With us it is perhaps even more important, because there are two of us. It's a long story. You see, Genevieve's father was a—what you would call a ne'er-do-well. He married my daughter, Genevieve's mother, and—deserted her before her baby was born. And I—well, of course I took care of them. There wasn't much money left, when David died—he had speculated unfortunately—and it took all of that, and what I could get by mortgaging the house here, to raise Genevieve and pay for her music lessons. The child had a divine voice, and we all three hoped, and believed, that one day it would make her both rich and famous."

"THINGS went beautifully. We managed to send her abroad to study—it took managing, too, but we did it—and her teachers had the same hopes for her that we had. When she had her audition at the Metropolitan, she was acclaimed a huge success. She was to make her debut as Marguerite, in *Faust*, and then—this!"

"How dreadful! Tell me how it happened."

"Her mother was—killed. Run over by a motor car. Genevieve adored her, and the shock of her death simply prostrated the child. From that day to this she has never been able to sing a note." For a moment she was sadly silent. Then a bright smile lighted up her sweet face. "But that's all over now," she said with quiet certainty. "One more séance and then—Genevieve will sing again. I know it. All our plans and hopes for her will be realized, once she is cured."

For a moment I had to bite my lip to keep from screaming, from crying out that she had been cheated, hoodwinked, made

the victim of a couple of greedy charlatans. But at thought of what my words would do to her, I choked them back. It was too terrible, too hideous, this thing we had done! I must do something; yet what *could* I do? Make Chick lay off her, keep her from losing any more money, certainly. But that wouldn't give the girl back her voice—and that was the only thing that really mattered. Oh, it was cruel, after raising her hopes to such a certainty.

"Genevieve and I want to ask a favor of you," she was saying. "We three have been through this wonderful experience together, this far. Will you stand by us and see us through this other séance? It would mean so much to us."

"Why—why—I'd love to," I stammered, "but—you see, I must leave town tomorrow—"

"Oh, that's all right," she interrupted. "The second séance is to be tonight. I had a telegram from the professor, just before you came."

THE miserable double-crossing cheat! So he'd planned the séance for tonight without telling me! I was furious.

"That's why Genevieve had to go out," Mrs. Tompkins hurried on. "Tonight we will have to pay the professor—"

"I'm paying for the other séance," I burst out. "After all, that was my cure; it did you no good."

"Oh, but it did, my dear. It gave us the assurance that this time Genevieve would be cured."

"I won't hear of it," I insisted. "Tonight is your own look-out. Last time was mine, and I shall pay for it."

Her face brightened perceptibly. "Well, if you insist, and it's all right with the professor."

"It will be all right with the professor."

"And you will come tonight?"

"I—I—why, yes. I'll be there."

Somehow I got out of that house, and made my way back to the apartment. Chick and I had a battle royal.

"They're not rich," I told him. "They're almost starving to death. The girl was out selling some of the family heirlooms, in order to pay you tonight. I told them I insisted upon paying for the other séance. And now, young man, you're going to call this thing off, right now. Understand?"

I've never seen Chick so mad. I thought for a moment he was going to strike me. Instead, he told me very plainly just what he thought of me; what we both knew my father would have thought of my behavior; what everyone in the game would think of me—and I didn't care. I only knew I must stop Chick, in some way. And right in the midst of the row, for we had lost all sense of time, the bell rang.

"There they are," he snapped. "And I'm in fine condition to pull a séance. My head is aching like nobody's business, and I'm as nervous as a cat. You'd better beat it quick!"

"Chick, let me tell them you're ill and can't see them."

"Not much. I'm putting on this show tonight—and you'd better get out. I'll manage without you."

"I'm not going!" I told him firmly.

"All right, then stay. But I warn you, one move to crab the act and you'll wish to heaven you hadn't."

He flung out of the room, and next moment he ushered the two women in.

I don't know why I stayed. I hadn't any idea what I was going to do. I only knew that, somehow, I was going to keep Chick from taking their money, if nothing else.

We all went immediately into the séance room, and Chick started the table-tipping. My nerves were on edge, and the whole thing seemed terribly artificial. Chick wasn't doing his stuff well at all. I hoped the women would sense that the whole thing was a fake, and leave; but they didn't. I was fast becoming hysterical under the strain of the situation, when I began to notice something strange about Chick. He had stopped talking, and was no longer making any attempt to tip the table. He just sat there, sort of huddled up. Then suddenly he began to snore in the strangest way. I thought, at first, it was some new stunt he was going to pull. Then the snoring stopped and he remained motionless.

"Chick!" I cried, in sudden panic. "Oh, something terrible has happened!" I jumped up, pushing the table away, and shook him, but he was perfectly limp.

"Please, Miss Johnson," said a soft voice at my elbow. "Don't interfere. He's all right. He's evidently gone into another of his trances." It was Genevieve De Witt.

"Yes, but you don't understand," I sobbed.

"It's all right, dear," whispered Mrs. Tompkins. "It's just the way he did last time."

Between them, they made me sit down, trembling, hysterical, scared nearly to death. Then the most horrible thing happened. Slowly, like waves of smoke, a white haze began to roll from Chick's body—a haze that gradually took form, until it became a beautiful woman, misty, but real.

"Mother!" gasped Genevieve De Witt.

"Hester!" sobbed the grandmother.

The apparition remained motionless, its sweet face alight. "Mother! You've come to help me—to let me sing again!"

Suddenly the voice of Genevieve De Witt was no longer husky and low, but clear and resonant. "Mother, I can sing—I can listen—"

And for a brief time the room resounded to the music of one of the most beautiful singing voices it has ever been my privilege to hear. Then, as if satisfied, the form of Hester De Witt began to fade, to become once more a smoky mist that slowly drifted back, back, into the prostrate body of Chick O'Brien. And at the same instant I fainted away.

They brought me to, very quickly, but with Chick it was different. The three of us worked over him for what seemed like an eternity, but without success. Then, when we had about given up hope and were deciding to call in a physician, he groaned feebly, and opened his eyes. For the next few moments, he was like a person coming out of a deep sleep, still too exhausted to move or speak. Once he was himself again, I lost no time in getting rid of the two women.

"I'll take care of him," I told them as they left. "I'll get in touch with the friend who brought me to him. He'll know what to do."

"And will you see that he gets this?" Mrs. Tompkins slipped a hard little roll of bills into my hand. "The dear man. It seems so little, really, for such a wonderful cure."

I took the bills, and kissed them both good-bye.

The rest of the story is quickly told. Chick was weak as a kitten for several days, and during that time he had time to think things over. I told him exactly what had happened—that he had called up a spirit, a body of ectoplasm from the Beyond—and I think it scared him to death.

"Ectoplasm! Me, an ectoplasmic medium! Good Lord!" he groaned. And a little later:

"We're getting out of this game, kid, once and for all," he said. "When things get to this point it's time to quit. We've made a nice little pile. Let's split, and call it quits."

I thought that over. I hadn't realized how much Chick meant to me, until the night of the séance when I thought his life was in danger. That experience taught me a lot!

"Chick—do you—that is, would you still want me to marry you?" I stammered.

"Would I!"

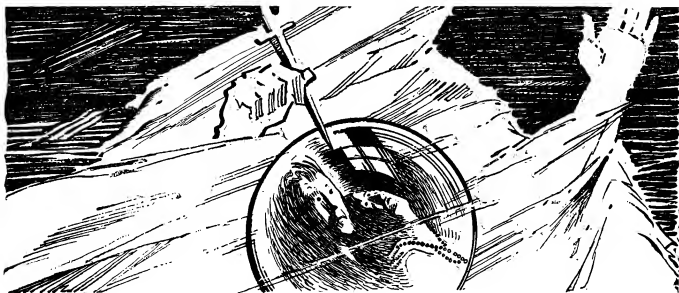
"After the way I tried to quit on you?"

"Say—I've been thinking that over, too," he told me, "and it took spunk, kid, to fight for what you believed was right, like you did. Sure I want to marry you."

"Well—let's. And buy ourselves a little business, somewhere, and cut out the graft. What do you say?"

Actions said more than words, right then. The "little business" is one of the sweetest little motion picture emporiums you ever saw. Chick and I manage it ourselves, and are happier than either one of us ever dreamed of being.

Oh, yes! Chick sent that money back to Mrs. Tompkins. Not that she will have need of it much longer—Genevieve De Witt has gone right on from where she left off—but he said he knew I'd be happier without it, and I am.



# SPIRIT TALES

*Can Mortal Eyes Look into the Future? Read a Popular Author's Answer—  
and Other Items of Special Interest*

By COUNT CAGLIOSTRO

**J**OHNS TOWNSEND TROWBRIDGE, a noted writer of stories for boys, sent the following account of an amazing personal experience to one of his friends, Doctor Hyslop, after which it was printed in the *Journal of the American Society for Psychic Research* for November, 1909:

One of my intimate friends of those years was Benjamin P. Shillaber, who had gained a reputation as a general humorist by his sayings of "Mrs. Partington." He was then editing the *Carpet Bag*, a weekly paper, mildly comic, to which I was a contributor. He was also interested in mysterious communications, and we often discussed them when we met. One day in his office he spoke to me of a friend whose wife was developing some extraordinary mediumistic traits. This friend was Alonzo E. Newton, editor of the *Pathfinder Railroad Guide*, whose office was in the same building with the *Carpet Bag*. I eagerly accepted the offer of an introduction. We found Mr. Newton correcting proofs at his desk, and after a little talk about the manifestations in his house, he invited me to call and witness them for myself. This was in October, 1852.

I called one evening and made the acquaintance of Mrs. Newton, in their modest home. She was petite in person, of a singularly trustful and sympathetic nature, generously impulsive, and, like her husband, earnestly religious. They were both members of the Edwards Congregational Church, although Mr. Newton was even then penning his remarkable letter to the Church on "The Ministry of Angels Realized," giving their own private, personal experience, and adducing Scriptural authority for the new, or rather renewed, faith—a letter which both signed, and which, when printed, created a considerable stir among the members of the body to which it was addressed, and led finally to the signers' withdrawal from a commission that had long been the habit of their lives, and was still dear to them. This was the first of a long series of able writings on the same and kindred topics by which Mr. Newton became well known to the spiritualists of America.

His wife's mediumship was as different as possible from

that which produced the rappings and other more material manifestations. When, as we sat together that first evening, the "influence," as it was called, came upon her, her eyes closed, her features assumed a rapt expression, she drew two or three deep breaths, in what seemed a condition of semi-trance (although she never at such times lost consciousness) and began to speak.

The subject was their troubled relations with the Church, regarding which some invisible friend was giving them comfort and counsel. Not invisible to her, however, for to her inward eyes the room was full of spiritual beings, some as real to her as if they had appeared in the flesh. The first communicant gave way to others, and some really beautiful and inspiring things were spoken on the subject of spirit existence and the belief in it—of all which I recall little but the ease and readiness of the language, quite different from the medium's ordinary speech. At length she turned to me and said in a changed voice, after a pause: "Your father is here."

**I** ASKED some questions, hoping for a test, but got none, although the answers were such as my father might have given, and her description of him was consistent with my recollection of his form and features after a lapse of eight or nine years. Whether these visions had any actuality, or existed in the seer's too weird imagination, I had no means of knowing, but I was convinced of the purity of her intentions, and of her husband's absolute faith in her.

My visits to the house became frequent after this, and I had the satisfaction of witnessing, and even in assisting in, the development of new phases of her mediumship. She was the first person I ever knew who had the psychometric faculty. I found her wonderfully accurate in reading the characters of persons wholly unknown to her, if something belonging to them—a lock of hair, or their handwriting—was placed between her palms or on her forehead. It might be enclosed in a blank envelope; it was not necessary for her to see it, or even to know what it was.

Once I tried the experiment of (Continued on page 95)

# The Mystery of the

## A True Story

By  
ROBERT W.  
SNEDDON

**D**O the dead, laid stiffly within their coffins, lie peacefully in the vaults to which their loved ones consign them?

In all but a few instances they do. But keepers of cemeteries occasionally come across strange things, which, out of respect for their charges, they prefer not to make public.

I do not speak of desecration of the tomb by ghoulish intruders, but of inexplicable happenings within vaults which have been sealed and barred against any invasion.

Caskets laid flat have been found standing on end or otherwise displaced—by what power or agency no man has been able to discover. Lids have been removed, fractured, burst open. The tale of terrors might be continued with gruesome and overwhelming detail. But those who discover the horrors do not speak of them. They reverently repair the damage and blot the affair from their minds. To dwell upon such things is to court madness.

If anyone believes I am speaking without reason, let that person explain the following well-authenticated stories of just such seemingly incredible happenings.

The first occurred on the island of Barbados, where it was recorded by the Reverend Thomas Orderson, Rector of Christ Church, and attested to by witnesses.

In the graveyard of Christ Church still stands a small but massively built vault. It has not been used for a century, and never will be used again, for the dead consigned to it will not rest in peace.

The vault was built sometime during the Eighteenth Century. Its walls, like many on that tropic island, are made of large blocks of coral, cemented together to withstand the passage of centuries. It is partly above ground, and partly imbedded in the limestone rock, so that to get into it, you have to go down several steps. You then find yourself in a cell, twelve feet long by six and a half feet wide, its roof slightly arched and its floor of leveled rock.

There is positively not a crevice in floor, wall or roof. The only opening is the door. When that was sealed with



*A strange sight met  
the eyes of the  
workmen*

the enormous slab of marble that now stands against the outer wall of the vault, all access was cut off.

Though the tomb was built for the Honorable Thomas Elliott, who died in 1724, there is no record of his body having been placed there. Indeed, when the vault was opened in 1807 there was not the slightest appearance of its having ever been used.

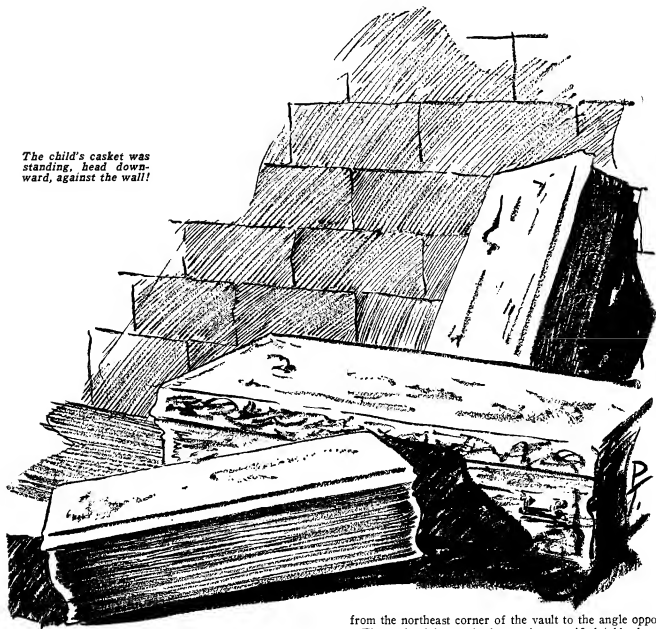
**O**N the 31st day of July, 1807, the body of Mrs. Thomasina Goddard was laid to rest in it. Her coffin was made of wood, unprotected by the customary leaden sheathing. It was, of all the coffins laid within the vault at later dates, the only one that was not encased in metal, and in consequence it was more liable to decay than the others, as we shall see.

The following year the vault passed into the possession of a well-known Barbados family by the name of Chase, and

# Dancing Coffins

*What fantastic force could animate a row of coffins  
—in a sealed vault?*

*The child's casket was  
standing, head down-  
ward, against the wall!*



was first used by them at the death of an infant daughter, Mary Ann Maria. When her tiny casket was placed in the vault on February 22nd, 1808, Mrs. Goddard's coffin was lying precisely as it had been placed.

Both of these coffins were still undisturbed when, four years later, Dorcas Chase, a young girl who had taken her own life in order to escape the cruel treatment of her father, Thomas Chase, was committed to the vault.

But when the body of Thomas Chase himself, also a suicide, was about to be placed in the vault on August 9th, 1812, a strange sight met the eyes of the workmen employed to open the vault. When the marble slab was removed, the two Chase coffins lay in totally different positions from those in which they had been placed!

The child's casket was standing, head downward, against the wall! It bore every evidence of having been tossed

from the northeast corner of the vault to the angle opposite.

The native laborers broke out into terrified jabbering and had to be compelled by force to finish the job. The coffins were then arranged in an orderly fashion and the vault was closed immediately after the burial of Chase. The slab was cemented in place.

Four years later the cement was removed and the slab dislodged to permit the burial of an infant, Samuel Ames.

**A** GAIN some strange malign force had disturbed the dead, though the coffin occupied by Mrs. Goddard remained untouched. It has been suggested by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who once studied the matter, that her coffin was left alone because it was not encased, and that whatever had moved the other coffins had a violent aversion to the lead in which they were sheathed.

There may be someone at this point who would lay the blame on some human agency, engaged in purposeless pranks.

Such an explanation is out of the question. Apart from the difficulty of opening the tomb, the caskets themselves presented an insurmountable obstacle to mishandling.

Consider, for example, the coffin containing Thomas Chase. The dead man was unusually large and heavy and his coffin was lead encased. Actually, it required the efforts of eight men to lift it. And yet that coffin had been flung across the vault!

On November 17th, of that same year, 1816, the vault was again opened to receive the body of Samuel Brewster, who had been killed in a slave revolt. Once more the four coffins were found to have been moved—and once more they were reverently placed in order.

The same people who had been present at the closing of the vault after the previous burial assisted at its reopening. They had left the coffins all in order, and now had seen them shifted. There was no doubting the testimony of their own senses.

**W**HEN in July, 1819, a similar state of confusion was discovered by those entombing the body of Thomasina Clarke, the mystery was taken in hand by the authorities. The reports of these restless dead were creating disturbances among the negro population—a dangerous situation indeed.

The Governor of Barbados, Lord Combermere—a soldier who had seen service in Spain with Wellington—was present at the burial. So were the Reverend Thomas Orchardson, Sir Robert Bowcher Clarke, the Honorable Nathan Lucas and other reliable eyewitnesses. We have their testimony for what followed.

The interior and exterior of the vault were most carefully examined, sounded, probed, without revealing a sign of any secret entrance. The floor was then covered with sand and raked smooth.

Mrs. Goddard's wooden coffin had crumbled away. The fragments of it, with her bones, were tied in a bundle and placed against the wall.

The three large coffins were set side by side on the sanded floor, their narrow ends facing the entrance. Upon them, one to each coffin, were placed the smaller coffins, making six in all.

The vault was then closed. The marble slab was cemented firmly into the doorway. Lord Combermere set his seal upon the cement and the other witnesses set their own marks.

Eight months passed. Whether or not it is true that someone heard a noise within the vault, we do not know. But something or other induced the Governor to command that the tomb be opened. His order was carried out on April 18th, 1820.

The same witnesses who had seen the vault sealed were present at its opening. Under the supervision of the Governor, they assured themselves that the cement and seals had not been tampered with; not a living soul had penetrated into the gloom of the tomb.

The cement was then laboriously removed and the slab taken up by six strapping natives engaged for the purpose.

There was a moment of suspense as the spectators hesitated; then they descended the steps.

There was no trace of footprints on the sanded floor, but as usual the only thing left undisturbed was the bundle of Mrs. Goddard's remains!

Little Mary Anne Chase's coffin, which had been lying on top of that of Dorcas, was on the floor. Dorcas' coffin which had lain with its head toward the back of the vault was now lying at an angle, almost across the entrance. Across its foot lay the upended casket of Samuel Brewster.

Thomas Chase's coffin was swung right around, its head now pointing to the door. The coffin of Samuel Ames which had lain upon it was tipped over on the sand, upside down. That of Thomasina Clarke, left upon Samuel Brewster's coffin, was now under it and completely reversed.

This was too much for the relatives of the deceased and the fantastic dancing coffins were removed and consigned to

earth. This transference seems to have appeased whatever agency had been at work, for we have no record of the bodies being further molested.

The vault was cleared out and has remained unused ever since.

At the time various explanations were offered for what remains to this day a wholly supernatural occurrence. It was suggested that earth tremors had caused the shifting. Yet no such tremors were noted during the period between 1812 and 1820.

Others said that the vault had been flooded and that the coffins floated out of place. How? one might ask, since the vault was cut into solid rock and extended only two feet below ground? Two feet of water would certainly not float, turn about in narrow space, or set up on end such heavy objects as lead encased caskets.

Still others, deliberately ignoring the tremendous feat of opening the vault—to say nothing of the impossibility of re-producing seals and other private marks—put the whole affair down to natives wrecking vengeance on the Chase family for some secret wrong.

If that were so, would not the coffins have been damaged and the bodies within them maltreated?

We come, therefore, to face an irrefutable staggering conclusion. The agency at work within this tomb was neither human nor natural. What it might have been can best be left to the imagination. We have, however, one slender clue. The suicide is said to be a restless spirit—and there were two within this graveyard cell.

Of the several other instances recorded of this mysterious interference with the dead, the next in degree of authenticity is that which occurred in a chapel on the island of Oesel, a Russian province in the Baltic Sea. The actual account is to be found in a contemporary report dated 1844.

In the immediate vicinity of Ahrensburg, the only town in the island, is the public cemetery, a spot so charmingly cultivated and laid out that it is the favorite promenade of the inhabitants.

Besides tombs of every variety, it contains several private chapels, each the burying place of some family of distinction. From every chapel a stairway leads down to a subterranean vault paved with wood. The coffins, placed side by side elevated on iron bars, are made of massive oak, very heavy and strongly put together.

The public highway passes in front of the cemetery, and any traveller who casts his eye in that direction can see, facing him, three chapels. The most spacious is that of the Buxhoeveden family, who have made it their place of interment for many generations.

**I**T was the habit of the country people, coming in carts or on horseback to visit the cemetery, to hitch their horses immediately in front of the Buxhoeveden chapel and close to the pillars that adorned it. This practice was not easily discouraged, although for ten or so years previous to the incidents about to be narrated, there had occasionally been vague rumors that the chapel in question was haunted, though no one could say how or why.

On Monday, June 22nd, 1844, the wife of an Ahrensburg tailor, Dalman, drove up in her cart to visit, with her children, her mother's tomb which was situated behind the Buxhoeveden chapel. As usual she hitched the horse close by.

While kneeling by the grave in silent prayer she had a vague feeling that she heard some noises coming from the direction of the chapel, but being absorbed at the time, she paid no attention.

When, however, the good woman came back to her horse, a quiet and docile animal, she found it in an inexplicable state of excitement. Covered with sweat and foam, it appeared to be in mortal terror. When she led it off, it seemed hardly able to walk. She gave up any idea of going further and returned to town. The veterinary to whom she took the

horse declared that the animal must have been excessively terrified from some cause or other, and treated it accordingly.

A day or two afterward the woman, while at the castle of one of the oldest families on the island, the Barons of Guldenstube, where she did sewing, told the Baron of the incident. He laughed at it and told her to forget it.

But that was only the beginning. . . .

Next Sunday several of the townsfolk who had hitched their horses by the chapel, found them covered with sweat, trembling, in the utmost terror. They, too, claimed to have heard strange sounds coming from the chapel. These might have been imagined, but there was nothing imaginary about the state of the horses.

One day in the course of the next month, July, it happened that eleven horses were hitched near the chapel while their owners visited in the cemetery. Some persons passing by heard terrible cries of distress and raised an alarm. When the owners reached the spot they found the poor animals in a pitiable condition.

Several of them in their frantic efforts to escape had thrown themselves on the ground and lay struggling there. Others were scarcely able to walk or stand, and all were violently affected. All eleven were treated, but four of them died in a day or two.

This was serious, and caused a formal complaint to be made by the sufferers to the Consistory—a court which had charge of church cases.

About this time a member of the Buxhoevden family died. At his funeral, during the reading of the service in the chapel, strange sounds were heard in the vault beneath. And when the casket was taken down into the vault, the mourners found, to their surprise, that of the numerous coffins which had been deposited there in due order side by side, almost all had been displaced and lay in a confused pile. They searched in vain for any cause that might account for this. The doors were always kept securely fastened and the locks showed no sign of having been tampered with.

The coffins were readjusted and the vault locked and barred once more.

There was still so much talk about the affair that Baron Guldenstube, the President of the Consistory, prevailed upon two members of the family to go privately with him and examine the vault most carefully. Once more the coffins had been shifted! This time the relatives were so distressed that they at once agreed to an official investigation.

The men charged with this inquiry were the Baron, the bishop, a physician, the burgomeister, one of the members of the guilds, and a secretary. They proceeded to the vault and found all the coffins but three displaced. The three left untouched were those of a grandmother of the present head of the family and two small children.

**T**HE first idea which suggested itself was that robbers might have broken in for the sake of plunder. The vault of an adjoining chapel had been forcibly broken into some time before and the rich velvet and gold fringe adorning the coffins had been cut off.

But in this vault there was no sign of such destruction. The commission then ordered several of the coffins to be opened, in order to find out whether the rings or other articles of jewelry which it was customary to bury with the dead, had been taken.

No indication of this sacrilege was discovered. One or two of the bodies had moldered almost to dust, but their trinkets still lay on the bottom of the coffins.

It next occurred to the commission as a possibility that the noises and the wilful displacement of the coffins were the work of some enemy of the Buxhoevden family who wanted to bring them into bad repute. Perhaps a subterranean passage had been excavated, with its entrance at some distance, cleverly concealed, and its exit somewhere in the vault.

To settle this point, workmen took up the pavement of the vault and carefully examined the foundations and walls. The most careful scrutiny revealed no secret entrance, or tunnel.

Nothing remained but to replace everything in order, taking exact note of the position of the coffins, and to adopt special precautions for the detection of any future intrusion.

Fine wood ashes were strewn over the floor of the vault, on the steps leading down to it, and on the paving of the chapel itself. Both doors—of the vault and of the chapel—after being carefully locked, were doubly sealed; first with the seal of the commission, and secondly with that of the arms of the city.

Finally, guards from the garrison of the town, relieved at short intervals, were set for three days to watch the building, day and night, and prevent anyone from approaching it.

**W**HEN the three days were up, the commission examined the chapel.

The outer door was found securely locked. The seals were unbroken. The members entered. There was not a mark upon the smooth layer of ashes. Neither on the floor of the chapel nor on the stairs descending to the vault was there the trace of a footprint, of man or beast.

They descended, broke open the door to the vault—and with shocked and startled eyes gazed at the horrifying sight before them.

Not only was every coffin displaced, with the exception of the same three as before, but many of them, weighty as they were, had been set on end so that the head of the corpse was downward.

Nor was this all. An even more gruesome sight met their eyes. The lid of one coffin had been forced open and from it projected the right arm of the corpse it contained, showing beyond the elbow, the lower arm being turned up toward the ceiling of the vault.

After recovering from the first shock, the commission proceeded carefully to take note, in detail, of the condition of things as they found them.

No trace of human footsteps was discovered in the vault, any more than on the stairs or in the chapel. Nothing had been removed from the coffins.

They approached, with natural reluctance, the coffin from which the bony arm was projecting, and with a shudder recognized it as that containing the remains of a member of the Buxhoevden family who had committed suicide. He had been found with his throat cut and the bloody razor still grasped in his right hand—the same hand that was thrust forth to human view from under the coffin lid.

An official report was immediately made out by the Baron as President and signed by all the others as witnesses. It set forth the state of the vault and of the chapel at the time when the commission set seals upon the doors; it verified the fact that the seals were afterward found unbroken and the coating of ashes undisturbed, and finally detailed the condition of things as they appeared when the commission revisited the chapel at the end of the three days.

This document, placed on record with the other proceedings of the Consistory, is to be found among its archives, and may be examined by any (Continued on page 93).



# Because a beautiful woman had died in that Marquis de la Tour-Samuel went

By

GUY de MAUPASSANT.

Famous French  
Writer

WE were speaking of sequestration, alluding to a recent lawsuit. It was at the close of a friendly evening in a very old mansion in the Rue de Grenelle, and each of the guests had a story to tell, which he assured us was true.

Then the old Marquis de la Tour-Samuel, eighty-two years of age, rose and came forward to lean on the mantelpiece. He told the following story in his slightly quavering voice:

I, also, have witnessed a strange thing—so strange that it has been the nightmare of my life. It happened fifty-six years ago, and yet there is not a month when I do not see it again in my dreams. From that day I have borne a mark, a stamp of fear—do you understand?

Yes, for ten minutes I was a prey to terror, in such a way, that ever since a constant dread has remained in my soul. Unexpected sounds chill me to the heart; objects which I can ill distinguish in the evening shadows make me long to flee. I am afraid at night.

No! I would not have owned to such a thing before reaching my present age. But now I may tell everything. One may fear imaginary dangers at eighty-two. But before actual danger I have never turned back, *mesdames*.

That affair so upset my mind, filled me with such a deep, mysterious unrest that I never could tell it. I kept it in that inmost part, that corner where we conceal our sad, our shameful secrets, all the weaknesses of our life which cannot be confessed.

I will tell you that strange happening just as it took place, with no attempt to explain it. Unless I went mad for one short hour it must be explainable, though. Yet I was not mad, and I will prove it to you. Imagine what you will. Here are the simple facts:

It was in 1827, in July. I was quartered with my regiment in Rouen.

One day, as I was strolling on the quay, I came across a man I believed I recognized, though I could not place him with certainty. I instinctively went more slowly, ready to pause. The stranger saw my impulse, looked at me, and fell into my arms.

It was a friend of my younger days, of whom I had been very fond. He seemed to have become half a century older in the five years since I had seen him. His hair was white, and he stooped in his walk, as if he were exhausted. He understood my amazement and told me the story of his life.

A terrible event had broken him down. He had fallen



*I do not believe in ghosts—and  
yet I broke down before the hide-  
ous fear of the dead*

madly in love with a young girl and married her in a kind of dreamlike ecstasy. After a year of unalloyed bliss and unexhausted passion, she had died suddenly of heart disease, no doubt killed by love itself.

He had left the country on the very day of her funeral, and had come to live in his hotel at Rouen. He remained there, solitary and desperate, grief slowly undermining him, so wretched that he constantly thought of suicide.



room, no man dared enter it. But the young  
there to recover a packet of

# BEWITCHED Love Letters

—he paid for them with fifty years of horror!

I shall also give you a note for the gardener, who will let you in.

"Come to breakfast with me to-morrow, and we'll talk the matter over."

I promised to render him that slight service. It would mean but a pleasant excursion for me, his home being not more than twenty-five miles from Rouen. I could go there in an hour on horseback.

At ten o'clock the next day I was with him. We breakfasted alone together, yet he did not utter more than twenty words. He asked me to excuse him. The thought that I was going to visit the room where his happiness lay shattered upset him, he said. Indeed, he seemed perturbed, worried, as if some mysterious struggle were taking place in his soul.

At last he explained exactly what I was to do. It was very simple. I was to take two packages of letters and some papers, locked in the first drawer at the right of the desk of which I had the key. He added:

"I need not ask you not to glance at them. They're of a most personal nature."

I was almost hurt by his words, and told him so, rather sharply. He stammered:

"Forgive me. I suffer so much!" and tears came to his eyes.

I left about one o'clock to accomplish my errand.

The day was radiant, and I rushed through the meadows, listening to the song of the larks, and the rhythmical beat of my sword on my riding-boots.

Then I entered the forest, and I set my horse to walking. Branches of the trees softly caressed my face, and now and then I would catch a leaf between my teeth and bite it with avidity, full of the joy of life, such as fills you without reason, with a tumultuous happiness almost indefinable, a kind of magical strength.

As I neared the house I took out the letter for the gardener, and noted with surprise that it was sealed. I was so amazed and so annoyed that I almost turned back without fulfilling my mission. Then I thought that I should thus display oversensitiveness and bad taste. My friend might have sealed it



"As I thus came across you again," he said, "I shall ask a great favor of you. I want you to go to my château and get some papers I urgently need. They are in the writing-desk of my room—of *our* room. I cannot send a servant or a lawyer, as the errand must be kept private. I want absolute silence.

"I shall give you the key of the room, which I locked carefully myself before leaving, and the key to the writing-desk.

She said, "Oh, you can be of great help to me, monsieur!" I suffer terribly."

unconsciously, worried and desperately unhappy as he was. The manor looked as though it had been deserted for the last twenty years. The gate, wide-open and rotten, held, one wondered how. Grass filled the paths; you could not tell the flower-beds from the lawn.

At the noise I made kicking a shutter, an old man came out from a side-door and was apparently amazed to see me there. I dismounted from my horse and gave him the letter. He read it once or twice, turned it over, looked at me with suspicion, and asked:

"Well, what do you want?"

I answered sharply:

"You must know it, as you have read your master's orders. I want to get into the house."

He appeared overwhelmed. He said:

"So—you are going in—in his room?"

I was getting impatient.

"*Parbleu!* Do you intend to question me, by chance?"

He stammered:

"No—monsieur—only—it has not been opened since—since the death. If you will wait five minutes, I will go in to see whether—"

I interrupted angrily:

"See here, are you joking? You can't go in that room, as I have the key!"

He no longer knew what to say.

"Then, monsieur, I will show you the way."

"Show me the stairs and leave me alone. I can find it without your help."

"But—still—monsieur—"

Then I lost my temper.

"Now be quiet! Else you'll be sorry!"

I roughly pushed him aside and went into the house.

I first went through the kitchen, then crossed two small rooms occupied by the man and his wife. From there I stepped into a large hall. I went up the stairs, and I recognized the door my friend had described to me.

I opened it with ease and went in.

The room was so dark that at first I could not distinguish anything. I paused, arrested by that moldy and stale odor peculiar to deserted and condemned rooms, of dead rooms. Then gradually my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, and I saw rather clearly a great room in disorder, a bed without sheets having still its mattresses and pillows, one of which bore the deep print of an elbow or a head, as if someone had just been resting on it.

The chairs seemed all in confusion. I noticed that a door, probably that of a closet, had remained ajar.

I first went to the window and opened it to get some light, but the hinges of the outside shutters were so rusted that I could not loosen them.

I even tried to break them with my sword, but did not succeed. As those fruitless attempts irritated me, and as my eyes were by now adjusted to the dimness, I gave up hope of getting more light and went toward the writing-desk.

I SAT down in an arm-chair, folded back the top, and opened the drawer. It was full to the edge. I needed but three packages, which I knew how to distinguish, and I started looking for them.

I was straining my eyes to decipher the inscriptions, when I thought I heard, or rather felt a rustle behind me. I took no notice, thinking a draft had lifted some curtain. But a minute later, another movement, almost indistinct, sent a disagreeable little shiver over my skin. It was so ridiculous to be moved thus, even so slightly, that I would not turn round, being ashamed. I had just discovered the second

package I needed, and was on the point of reaching for the third, when a great and sorrowful sigh, close to my shoulder, made me give a mad leap two yards away. In my spring I had turned round, my hand on the hilt of my sword, and surely had I not felt that, I should have fled like a coward.

A tall woman, dressed in white, was facing me, standing behind the chair in which I had sat a second before.

Such a shudder ran through me that I almost fell back! Oh, no one who has not felt them can understand those gruesome and ridiculous terrors! The soul melts; your heart seems to stop; your whole body becomes limp as a sponge, and your innermost parts seem collapsing.

I do not believe in ghosts; and yet I broke down before the hideous fear of the dead; and I suffered, oh, I suffered more in a few minutes, in the irresistible anguish of supernatural dread, than I have suffered in all the rest of my life!

If she had not spoken, I might have died. But she did speak; she spoke in a soft and plaintive voice which set my nerves vibrating. I could not say that I regained my self-control. No, I was past knowing what I did; but the kind of pride I have in me, as well as a military pride, helped me to maintain almost in spite of myself an honorable countenance. I was making a pose—a pose for myself, and for her—for her, whatever she was, woman, or phantom. I realized this later, for at the time of the apparition, I could think of nothing. I was afraid.

She said:

"Oh, you can be of great help to me, monsieur!"

I TRIED to answer, but I was unable to utter one word. A vague sound came from my throat.

She continued:

"Will you? You can save me, I suffer terribly. I always suffer. I suffer, oh, I suffer!"

And she sat down gently in my chair. She looked at me.

"Will you?"

I nodded my head, being still paralyzed.

Then she handed me a woman's comb of tortoise-shell, and murmured:

"Comb my hair! Oh, comb my hair! That will cure me. Look at my head—how I suffer! And my hair—how it hurts!"

Her loose hair, very long, very black, it seemed to me, hung over the back of the chair, touching the floor.

Why did I do it? Why did I, shivering, accept that comb, and why did I take between my hands her long hair, which left on my skin a ghastly impression of cold, as if I had handled serpents? I do not know.

That feeling still clings about my fingers, and I shiver when I recall it.

I combed her; I handled, I know not how, that hair of ice. I bound and unbound it; I plaited it as one plaits a horse's mane. She sighed, bent her head, seemed happy.

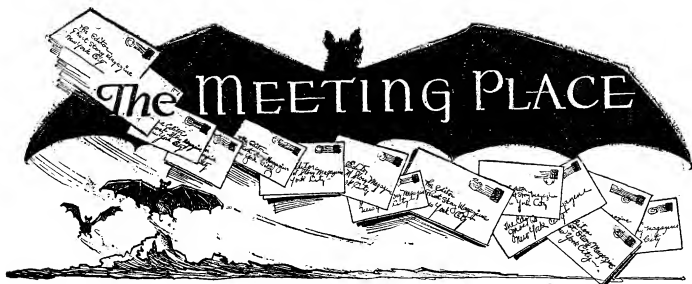
Suddenly she said, "Thank you," tore the comb from my hands, and fled through the door which I had noticed was half opened.

Left alone, I had for a few seconds the hazy feeling one feels in waking up from a nightmare. Then I recovered myself. I ran to the window and broke the shutters by my furious assault.

A stream of light poured in. I rushed to the door through which that being had gone. I found it locked and immovable.

Then a fever of flight seized me, a panic, the true panic of battle. I quickly grasped the three packages of letters from the open desk; I crossed the room running, I took the steps of the stairway four at a time. I found myself outside, I don't know how, and seeing my horse close by, I mounted in one leap and left (Continued on page 94)





# What Has Margery Proved?

*An Editorial by* ROBERT NAPIER

FOR six years Margery, famous Boston medium, has been in constant communication with what purports to be the spirit of her brother, Walter Stinson, who was killed in 1912 in a railway accident. In the presence of hundreds of witnesses "Walter" has laughed and joked in a voice that is apparently independent of the medium. He has talked in characteristic fashion even when Margery and all the other persons in the room were effectively gagged!

Margery has not been content merely to exhibit the phenomenon; she has tried tirelessly to establish the fact that the speaker is actually her departed brother. One series of daring experiments—the materialization of a spirit hand and the recording of its finger-prints—was described in the April GHOST STORIES. Another equally startling experiment is to be described here.

A year ago, a group of scientists, including A. R. Crawford, of the University of Chicago, and Doctor E. W. Brown, agreed to meet in the home of Margery at 10 Lime Street, Boston. The medium herself was *not* to be present. She and her husband were to spend the evening under the observation of another group of scientists at 70 Chestnut Street, an eighth of a mile away. In New York City, 250 miles away, a third group were to meet at the same time with George Valiantine, the medium. Still another group would meet with Doctor Hardwicke at Niagara Falls, 450 miles away.

The purpose was to learn whether or not "Walter" could manifest himself to the first group *without Margery being present*, and whether he could transmit secret information not only to Margery but also—at the same time—to Valiantine and Hardwicke. If this could be done, it would certainly be strong corroboration of the claim that "Walter" existed as an independent, discarnate being.

Around nine o'clock, on March 3rd, the Crawford group gathered at No. 10 Lime Street. The other groups began their sittings at the same hour. One member of the Crawford group—a prominent New England police official—brought with him a sealed box containing an assortment of cards prepared by clerks in his office. On each card were pasted some pictures clipped from magazines. The official had placed his thumb-print on every card—so as to forestall trickery—but he had not looked at the pictures. His head clerk shuffled the cards, also without looking at the pictures, placed them in the box and sealed it. *No person on earth knew all the cards in the box*, and the only person to know a particular card was the person who made it, and, in each instance, that one person was an unknown clerk, who had no knowledge as to the purpose for which the card was made.

At 9:10 the séance began at 10 Lime Street. The room was locked. The lights were extinguished. The Crawford group sat in a circle around a table, holding hands. Mr. J. H. Brown was delegated to open the box in the pitch darkness. He drew one card, passed it to Crawford and closed the box again. Crawford held the card in the center of the table. He immediately reported that his hand felt icy cold. At 9:15 five raps sounded in Margery's empty cabinet. Every sitter heard them distinctly. The card was then placed in Crawford's billfold, without any person having seen it. The sitting continued in the darkness until ten o'clock with the whole circle holding hands and no one leaving the locked room.

In the meantime, at 9:37, Margery, sitting in a brightly lighted room, surrounded by observers, began to write without going into trance. First, she drew a rectangle and three cigarettes with smoke curling up from them, then four unlighted cigarettes. Then she wrote:

*Ha, ha. The joke is on the cop. One of the letters has fallen off the word.*

*El. El. And I have found what I walked for. El. . .*

*Ask your friends why they mix the animals. A rose by any name would smell as sweet, Cop.—Ha, ha.*

W. S. S. (Walter Stinson)

*Five raps, five raps. . .*

*Hello and good-by. You will find the missing letter in the box. Atta boy.*

At 9:40, in New York City, Valiantine received the following message:

*Have the kid (this means Margery) under.*

At 9:45 Valiantine drew a picture of a package of cigarettes with two protruding from the package. The letters "CA" appeared on the drawing; also the words: "I have walked."

At 9:52, at Niagara Falls, Hardwicke, in trance, received the letter "M" and a mental picture of a camel.

WHEN the test card was examined at 10:15, it was found to be a picture of a package of Camel Cigarettes with three cigarettes protruding. Superimposed on the package was a picture of a cat. At the bottom were pasted the two letters "CA," while a smudge indicated where a third letter had been.

*The letter "T" was later found in the box, just as Margery's message had stated.*

It is unnecessary to comment on the results except to point out: first, that two references were made to the well-known advertising slogan, "I'd walk a mile for a Camel"; second, that the rectangle drawn by Margery at the beginning of the séance proved to be the exact size, to one-sixteenth of an inch, of a package of cigarettes; third, that the five raps corresponded to the five letters in the word "Camel."

It will be noted that none of the mediums wrote the word "Camel," though both Margery and Valiantine drew pictures of cigarettes and Hardwicke received a mental picture of a camel plodding through the sand. The word itself, however, was transmitted *in sections* to the three! Valiantine received "CA"; Hardwicke received "M"; and Margery received "EL."

Does this astounding experiment prove the reality of spirit "control"—or does it demonstrate the existence of some weird, unexplainable form of clairvoyance and telepathy?

READERS are invited to send brief accounts of personal experiences with the occult to *The Meeting Place*. The correspondent's full name and address must be signed to each letter but we will print only the initials or a pseudonym if it is requested. Answers to other correspondents' letters will also be printed. See the letters on the next page.

## Lord Haldane's Strange Dream

THE late Lord Haldane and his amazing prophetic dream were recently referred to in the *Journal of the American Society of Psychical Research*. The incident took place in March, 1924, when Mr. Edmund Gosse, the eminent critic and a very good friend of His Lordship, was still alive.

It seems that after one of Mr. Gosse's illnesses, his physicians set a certain Friday as the day when he might receive three visitors, of whom Lord Haldane was to be one. On the preceding Thursday night Lord Haldane had his disturbing dream. In the course of it he left the House of Lords at four o'clock, to pay his call on Mr. Gosse, but as he crossed the street he met Mr. Gladstone (the Victorian statesman, dead for thirty years) who engaged him in conversation, reproaching him very strongly for having joined a Socialist Government. The discussion taking place in the middle of the road lasted for the better part of an hour, so that traffic was seriously congested. Moreover, Lord Haldane suddenly realized, to his horror, that he would be over an hour late in arriving at the Gosse house, and that the invalid would naturally be anxious. He hurried on his way, therefore, and found his friend in a state of collapse. Thus ended the dream.

On Friday, nevertheless, Lord Haldane left the House at four o'clock, to go to Mr. Gosse, just as he had done in the dream. But at the spot where he had met Mr. Gladstone he was knocked down by an omnibus, and the accident was duly reported. Happily, however, he was not hurt, although the shock had been too great to permit of his going on to his sick friend's house. He returned home, and after a short rest, started out again. As in the dream, he arrived over an hour later than he was expected and found Mr. Gosse greatly perturbed.

Lord Haldane himself is said to have vouched for the dream and its sequel.

New York City.

I. L.

### The Girl Who Tried to Come Back

AFTER reading the experiences of others, I cannot resist the temptation to tell my own tale of encounters with the supernatural.

They began with the death of my sister Louesa, on May 13th, 1905. At the time we were living on a farm near a little Quaker town in Ohio. We had a large, flower filled front yard in which we young ones delighted. It was on a day shortly before her death, and when she was quite well, that Louesa suddenly announced that when she died she wanted to be buried in the front yard, under a certain flowering bush. I remember saying, "Why, Louesa!" too shocked for words. But she only replied, "Well, I just cannot tell you—" as if she could not bear to tell us she was going to die.

On the day before her burial my sister was laid out downstairs and my brother, my other sister and I were up in the sewing room talking about Louesa and our belief in the Hereafter.

Suddenly my brother said, "I believe Louesa's spirit is right around here now and that she is looking upon her body and glad to be out of the world."

As he was talking, a light hammering had begun to sound in the wall—*rat-tat-tat*. I saw my brother's face go very white—I did not know why, then. But all of a sudden there was a loud *bump* under the floor and a heavy chair jumped up in the air three times and came down with a crash.

I was so frightened I ran downstairs calling my brother a witch. But he denied that, and said that he, too, was shocked, as the manifestation had been the result of mental suggestion. He had said: "Louesa, if you are really here, show yourself above that chair there"—and just at that instant we heard the thump and had seen the chair move.

Brother felt sure that had I not screamed our sister would have appeared.

The night after Louesa was laid to rest my sister and I were lying awake in the same room, although neither of us knew the other was not asleep. I heard three loud raps at the foot of the bed, and then there came light footsteps across the floor, straight to the bed Louesa had slept in. After that both my sister and I heard the springs creak, just as if someone had lain down on them.

Can I help but believe, now?

Toledo, Ohio.

MISS MINNIE SCHLEGEL.

### When All Else Failed

ABOUT a year ago, my aunt, who lives in Bay City, Michigan, had an uncanny experience with the supernatural. She wrote to me shortly after her husband's death and told me of her distress at being unable to find the will which she was sure my uncle had left. She had a son and two small daughters to support and was sorely in need of the funds she knew her husband had bequeathed to her. But though she and the children searched high and low they could find no trace of the missing will.

Finally one warm July night my aunt was lying down, suffering from such an acute headache that she could not sleep. A little before midnight, as she looked toward the foot of the bed, she saw what seemed to be a white vapor. That was as nearly as she could describe it, but as she looked she could plainly distinguish in it the form and features of her husband. At first the impossibility of the thing made her think she was dreaming, but as her eyes became accustomed to the dark she realized that she was wide awake, and that her husband was trying to communicate something to her. The spirit pointed urgently towards the clothes closet—and then vanished.

My aunt was thoroughly mystified. Why had he come to her? And why had he pointed at the clothes closet, of all places? The next morning, however, she found the answer to the riddle. In going through one of my uncle's vests in the closet, she found in one pocket some folded papers. One was a business letter, and the other was the will! My aunt was sure her husband had known of her troubles and had returned to help her.

Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan.

MARY WESSEL.

### A Wraith That Races Autos

OUR town was all a-flutter last December over the newspaper accounts and rumors of a ghost in Boulder Canyon. It got so, after a while, that people were afraid to drive along the highway that goes through the canyon, for the shadowy thing seemed to delight in racing with the cars, floating along in the air beside them.

It was no joke, I can tell you, as hundreds of motorists saw the Thing and were terribly frightened. They described it as being about four feet high, and so white as to be clearly visible against the dark canyon. When the ghost tired of racing with autos, none of which could outdo it in speed, it would scale the walls on either side of the road—walls too steep even for a mountain goat. Hundreds of persons were in the search parties that set out to find its place of hiding, but their efforts were without success: the thing vanished as quickly and mysteriously as it had appeared.

There was talk for a while of some man who had a device which produced the wraith and manipulated it, but the story was denied by the authorities. The apparition finally went away of its own accord, and organized investigations covering the fourteen miles of canyon from Sturgis to Deadwood, have not yet found an explanation for the horror.

Rapid City, S. D.

READER.

Behind the scenes  
in a  
New York night-club,  
Haskell fights for the  
girl he loves—  
while occult forces  
seek to  
overwhelm him!

*Ella watched us, dumfounded. Either she could not cry out—or she dared not.*



# The man with the

By JAMES HASKELL

FROM the first, the old house we had taken in Corona, Long Island, struck me as having something uncanny about it. But it was mainly while seated at a curious workbench in the attic that I definitely sensed an unseen presence.

One evening, after a strange experience in the attic, I went for a walk. As I passed the subway entrance, a beautiful girl almost fainted against me and asked me to take her home. She seemed to be very frightened and kept looking over her shoulder at a man, saying: "It is he!" She would tell me nothing more, except her name—Ella Birxbee.

I hurried home and went straight to my workbench. Suddenly a copper plate on which I had been hammering started to rap out a message in Morse Code—"crystalslipper," fol-

lowed by "ellabirxbee." As I sat there, uncomprehending, a weird figure appeared in the moonlight—an old, old man, who pointed to the telephone book and disappeared! On consulting the directory I found the Crystal Slipper to be a night club.

Still mystified, I went to the cabaret the next night. I had just sat down when a striking-looking man with the scar of a sabre cut across his cheek asked if he might join me and introduced himself as Raoul Murtha. He seemed disinterested in the entertainment until a lovely dancer appeared. It was Ella Birxbee! My companion spoke of her in a way that in-



*In the flick of an eye Dixie Lee had sprung at my throat!*

# SABRE CUT

*As told to Alan Schultz*

furied me. Then in the midst of her number, the dancer collapsed and lay senseless on the floor. When I looked up, Raoul Murtha's eyes were fixed hypnotically on her. Later I heard him give instructions to his Jap chauffeur and learned he was planning to take Ella on a party that night!

Convinced of danger, I sent my card in to Ella, begging her to see me. As I waited in the corridor a powerful force seemed to impel me toward the door of a winchroom. Against my will I opened it—to face the hunched-up figure of Murtha's Jap chauffeur, his apraised hand holding a

gleaming knife! One more step and I was done for. I knew it—and yet I was powerless to retreat—to do anything save advance—to certain death!

**A** CONTORTION seized the Jap. His trim figure was now a crouching, deformed monstrosity, and as he moved slowly toward me, his knife poised for the death blow, murder gleamed in his eyes and his movements were those of a jungle ape. . . .

Suddenly he froze in his tracks. He shuddered, while his arm, raised for the blow, dropped and a shadow of fear swept over him. The next moment I realized the cause. A rumble of voices sounded behind me. People were approach-

ing outside—and the door to the winerom was open!

The man before me was shaking as with the ague. Amazingly, a change was taking place in him. His twisted, crippled look was vanishing. Under my eyes, as if by magic, the Jap seemed to regain something of the trim chauffeur's figure I was familiar with. The sight transfixed me.

The voices heightened. The Jap spun around. Almost faster than I could follow with my eye, he glided to the rear of the winerom. He lifted something, a trapdoor possibly, and vanished through the floor.

I was too spent to enjoy the relief. Those last few moments had been paralyzing. Every ounce of will had petered out of me. For a while I stood dumbly listening to the voices.

When I regained my senses, I realized that the first thing to do was to escape from the winerom. The irresistible, magnetic force which had been pulling me in seemed to have abated. I started to back out toward the corridor, keeping my eyes centered on the floor, lest the devilish Jap spring from under the trapdoor through which he had slipped. Only as I neared the threshold did I buck up the courage to turn.

AT the door of the winerom, two people stood hesitantly: the waiter whom a few minutes previously I had sent with the note to Ella Bixbee, and a tall girl in a flashy evening gown.

"What the Sam Hill are you doing in here?" said the waiter. His eyes looked menacing. I had to restrain an impulse to punch his insolent face, for I was angry now. Something had tricked me, had forced me against my will and I had an unreasoning urge to get square.

"Guests ain't permitted to wander around here. Hell, this ain't a museum, Mister!" the waiter continued in a growl. The tall girl whispered to him.

I stepped fully out into the corridor and shut the door of the winerom behind me. That done, I felt safer. The girl whispered to the waiter again and this time he nodded his head and left us.

"Are you Jimmy?"

That startled me. The tall girl's coquettish voice was entirely out of key with my shaken nerves. In a moment, however, I realized that she and the waiter had no inkling of the grotesque, blood-curdling adventure through which I had just passed. Either the Jap had been too fast for them or it had been too dark for them to see what was going on in the winerom. Still, she startled me.

"Say! Why the silence? Do I have to use the deaf and dumb language with you?"

"I beg your pardon," I began hesitantly.

"Nix on the French! Better tell me your story, pronto."

No doubt my face looked stupid. Part of my confusion was due to the disconcerting effect of the girl's voice and manner.

"I'm sorry," I said. "There must be a mistake. I wished to speak to Miss Bixbee."

"Oh, there's no mistake—yet. Listen, Big Boy, don't stall. What's in your hat?"

"I'm looking for Miss Bixbee."

"Yeah, I got that. But why? I'm Dixie Lee, her girl friend. I see all the comers who try to crash the kid and I sort out the bums."

So it was she who lived with Ella Bixbee! At once I realized I had better gain her confidence.

"Honest, Miss Lee," I said, "all I want is a few minutes alone with Miss Bixbee."

"Is that all? Just a few minutes alone!" she echoed sarcastically.

"I'm serious, Miss Lee. I have a message."

"Oh, bottle it! Ella and I have a date for the evening. I've no time to watch you play this Western Union act."

"I don't know how to be clearer—" I said confusedly.

An odd throbbing was in my temples and I could feel my head wet, as if I were perspiring copiously. My eyes involuntarily left Miss Lee's face and turned to the narrow slit of light coming from the partially open door to the main hall of the cabaret. The crack of light fascinated me. I felt drawn to it. I could not wrench my staring eyes away from it—and then, with my breath catching in my throat, I realized I was looking into two black eyes!

I had a confused mental flash of Raoul Murtha, the man with the sabre cut, and with difficulty I forced myself back to my problem. Dixie Lee was smiling at me now, sorry perhaps for my confusion.

"You are a queer one!" she said.

Possibly if I had had the adroitness to follow up my advantage I would have gained my point then. But strategy is not in my line. To blurt out what I suspected about Raoul Murtha, or worse still, to tell her of the eerie message I had received over the copper plate on my work bench in the attic, of the ghost who had influenced me to seek out the Crystal Slipper—how could I tell this weird story to Dixie Lee? She would consider me an madman and surely keep me from seeing Ella Bixbee.

The sound of a door opening gave me a start. My nerves were still jangled. I had not yet forgotten the Jap and his knife. . . .

At the darker end of the long corridor a light splashed over the floor for an instant. Then the door I had heard closed, and the light was snuffed out. I stood watching for someone to emerge, and Dixie turned too.

"That's Ella," she said, and a confiding quality in her voice gave me hope.

It was now or never, I knew. In the next few minutes I had to win the confidence of these girls—or lose the battle. Already, I was thinking of it as a battle. For I understood I was up against the uncanny stratagems of a formidable enemy.

Nevertheless, it must be understood that at this time I had only the faintest suspicion of psychic or unearthly forces at work in my adventure. Even the telegraphic code message I had received from the attic Ghost had not entirely won me to an admission that I was in the mesh of other world phenomena.

Ella Bixbee came up to us, in a smartly tailored suit, a dashing felt toque on her head, her face radiant with a soft, womanly gentleness such as only young, unspoiled girls have.

"Is he all right, Dixie dear?" Ella's voice came pleasantly out of the dimness.

I KNEW a second of suspense. Dixie might say anything. To my surprise, she replied, "Yeah, he looks harmless. His patter is as gentle as soap suds. Ta-ta—I'm going to pack my stuff away. Back in a jiffy."

"Are we really going, Dixie?" I heard Ella say.

"Sure! Raoul's got his Isotta Fraschini waiting for us. We'll be grander than Peggy Hopkins Joyce."

Dixie Lee ran down the corridor. Now was my chance. There were a few minutes in which I could explain my mission. Ella's sweet look of kindness gave me hope. It would be easier to talk to her than to the cynical Dixie.

"Listen, Miss Bixbee," I said quickly, "please believe me. Something I heard makes it necessary for me to warn you to give up your party tonight!"

"What?" Ella's voice was very uneasy.

"It's not safe."

"Oh, don't say such things! You frighten me."

Her blue-gray eyes were beseeching and I had an intuitive flash. The girl had an idea of what was on my





mind! Some hint of what I was only guessing, she already knew!

"Do you say that because you suspect the danger yourself?" I asked.

"No! No! How did you know there was to be a party?"

"I know Raoul Murtha," I answered slowly.

Some shadow of fear came over Ella.

"Is he a friend of yours?" she cried.

I shook my head in denial. There was a pathos about her which touched me deeply; she was so beautiful. I meant to help her even to the point of sacrificing my life. . . .

Ella was no longer the splendidly gay creature of the coral and gray military costume, doing intricately smart steps in a dance; there was a tragic quality about her, making her seem like a lost child.

**A** SENSE of threatening interruption from the corridor possessed me, but though I surveyed its length with a careful eye, I saw no danger. I took Ella's hand in mine and said, "Will you give up the engagement with Raoul Murtha tonight?"

She looked up. Her beautiful eyes seemed to me to be commissioning me to serve her. As for me, I was already fully committed to do my utmost.

"It's all dreadful," she said. "Everything is creepy, lately. Things peep out of the dark—and I'm so worried about Dixie."

"One thing you can bank on—there will be less to regret if you don't go to Murtha's party tonight. I give you my word for that!"

"But Dixie is set on going. She's coaxed me for a week. I can't refuse; she'd go alone."

"Let her, then!" I said quickly.

Consternation showed in the beauty of Ella Bixbee's sweet face.

"No, we mustn't let her go alone. It would be awful. We must not!" she cried out.

My heart was thrilled to hear her say *we* must not. Her hand was touching my arm, her fingers encircling it. I was almost joyous. Then, as often during my recent harrowing experiences, I felt no concern with the incalculable forces about us, of the hazardous duel in which I had already engaged myself. Only the spell of Ella's charm enthralled me. Unseen horrors faded away.

Ella was talking with a soft gentleness: "I do depend on you. Last night when you took me home from the subway, I don't know what I would have done without you."

We were standing in the dim corridor, between the entrance to the main hall of the cabaret and the door of the wineroom. There was nothing unusual astir, and yet something gruesome seemed to be lurking in the darkness.

Ella was saying, "You were just in time last night. I thought my life was passing out. Queer—but that's how it was —" and a shadow settled on her as she spoke. Her eyes grew somber.

"What is it you're afraid of? Why don't you tell me?" I cried. It had grown on me that instead of my being in a position to warn Ella, she knew more than I did. Her eyes were eloquent of suppressed fear.

"I don't know how!" she cried. "I wish I did. Nothing is clear. Dixie acts peculiar. Our house seems bewitched. Oh, it's all a jumble, and it's horrible too."

"Don't be afraid, Ella!" I begged. "I mean to keep a watch over you, if you'll let me."

Almost as I spoke, my throat began to grow dry and I felt a draft of cold over my legs, like water climbing up and up. The door of the wineroom was opening! Slowly, weirdly, silently. The sensation of coldness was coming from the cavernous blackness as the door swung open. There was no light. On the threshold of the wineroom I could see nothing. Yet the door continued to open and the cold to rise over my limbs.

I took a step forward, my arm raised. In a desperate resolve I determined to struggle with whatever was to come out of that wineroom. Would he have his long, gleaming knife poised? In my excitement I could think only of the *Ja*.

My head and shoulders were wet with the nervous struggle that gripped me. I tried to speak, to warn Ella. My voice fell dead. I tried to move. My body was in a vise of unseen forces.

Then, there was a commotion at the darker end of the corridor. One of the creaky dressing-room doors had slammed too hard and got stuck. Almost immediately the wineroom door sprang shut, as if a spring had been released.

I stood tense in every nerve, waiting. Someone was coming up the corridor. I could *hear* my heart beating. The steps came closer. When the person passed across the slit of light which shone from the partly opened main door, I saw it was Dixie coming back to us. Her voice reached us gaily: "Have you two children finished playing buttercups?"

"Dixie, dear, will you do me a favor?" I heard Ella ask.

"Good night!" cried Dixie. "When she starts that tune I know trouble is coming up the road—and with mud all over it."

Ella gave a sweet tinkle of laughter. "No, honey; I just want you to be sweet and get Jim Haskell in on the party with us tonight."

In a moment I saw Ella's ruse. She did not believe she could talk Dixie out of going to the Murtha party, so instead she had hit on the plan of having me along as a special escort.

Dixie was making a wry face.

"Geewizzigers," she said, "won't Raoul Murtha be tickled! He asks you out, and not only do I drag along as nurse but you want to bring your own playmate!"

Though Dixie's smile was cynical, I guessed she was about to give in to Ella's request. Ella must have had the same idea, for I saw her go close to her friend and reach up to kiss her lips.

But Dixie held off. "Nix, on the blamey!" she cried. "As it happens, the party is postponed anyway."

Postponed! I breathed with relief.

Ella smiled happily. But I could see Dixie resented our pleasure.

"We're going tomorrow night instead," she added. "Raoul just saw me in my dressing room. He said someone spoiled his mood for a party tonight."

Did the man with the sabre cut mean me? I had an uneasy sense of apprehension. The prospect of his enmity was appalling. It was not any vague fear of ghostly forces. Murtha was concrete enough; a dread figure. Nothing that happened during the evening unnerved me as much as the thought that Raoul Murtha had abandoned the party on my

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**If you have not already begun  
"The Man with the Sabre Cut,"  
now is the time to do it. A complete  
synopsis of the first instalment is  
given on page 76 and you can still  
have the pleasure of reading all the  
thrilling developments in this un-  
usual story of intrigue and terror  
on Broadway**

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account. Had he already guessed my feeling for the dancer?

I took both girls home that night, extracting a promise from Ella that she would see me tomorrow night if I came to the Crystal Slipper. When I asked her whether she meant to attend Murtha's party on the morrow, she replied enigmatically, "Who knows?"

The moment I left the girls at their home, I hastened back to my own house. I am sure, now, I had no conscious expectation of doing anything further that night, for I was fagged out. Yet, without hesitation, I went quietly up to my attic and sat down at my workbench.

A faint moonlight came through the window and I gazed absent-mindedly toward it, repeating to myself in an endless refrain, "If only I had a sign . . . If only I had a sign . . ."

No doubt what was really in my mind was a hope that the ghost I had seen the day before would reappear and give me more definite indication of a course to follow.

**J**UST when I felt I was dozing off, still repeating the phrase, the moonlight through the window seemed for a moment to give off a mist, and there arose a phosphorescent haze all over it. Then, as if stepping through a curtain, a vision moved into the room! It was the ancient specter I had seen the day before. This time it was more substantial and I could clearly make out its general semblance.

The ghost moved quickly toward me and I had the impression it laid a hand on my shoulder. But I am not sure, now, whether it did, or whether it simply raised one arm. A curious vibration was running through me and I was conscious of an odd sensation. My right knee kept jerking spasmodically, striking against the edge of the workbench. Later I confirmed this impression on finding a wide bruise above my right knee cap.

But the most startling phenomenon was a quick movement of the ghost's lips. I heard no words. The air in the attic hung dead. My eyes strove to read the lips—and then the ghost vanished like a steamy wraith snuffed out by a cold wind. *But the moment the ghost had disappeared I knew what the lips had said:* "Do everything to prevent Ella from going to Murtha's party tomorrow."

I have since wondered how it was that I heard no words and saw only moving lips, and yet was acutely sensible of their message as soon as the ghost had vanished. There may be an important vein of psychic knowledge in this, but I cannot go into it here. I must hurry on with the subsequent events.

The first one of any importance was the episode at the Crystal Slipper the next night. I had been doing my utmost to convince Ella that she must not go to Murtha's party. She had in turn argued with Dixie. Finally, the latter had come out to me in the corridor of the cabaret and invited me into her dressing room to "get the call-down of your life."

Meekly I followed her into a box-like room furnished with a pipe rack of hanging costumes, a pine kitchen table, three chairs and a mirror. A negress was washing stockings in a marble bowl in one corner. Ella Bixbee sat, her knees crossed, looking very worried. Dixie told the negress to get out for a while and then she turned to me.

"James, you're getting to be a nuisance," she said. "It's important for Ella to trip along on this Murtha party." "It's hard luck to go tonight," I said. "I've got a hunch that never fails, and I tell you it's bad luck to go."

Most stage folks are superstitious and I was banking on that. At any rate, I could see that Dixie was taken aback at the force of my conviction. Seeing my advantage, I followed up with additional arguments: Ella had a touch of a cold; she was tired; another postponement would serve Murtha right since he had voluntarily put off the party the night before. I threw myself into my pleading, conscious as I was of the ghost's command to me.

Dixie seemed on the point of yielding. Then, suddenly, she changed. Her arm shot out at me, almost striking my chin. Her face began a spasmodic grimacing. She was

gazing wildly, helplessly about her. Ella jumped to her feet and ran toward her friend.

"Ella, save me!" Dixie cried with a strange huskiness—and said no more.

She seemed no longer to recognize Ella. In her own eyes, a shift of coloring was taking place—as if a veil were obliterating their natural color. Her lower jaw moved in spasms as if it were out of joint. . . . It was really a fearful sight.

Ella had taken Dixie in her arms and was trying to comfort her, saying in soft, crooning tones, "You're safe, dear, don't worry. Jim and I will see you through."

At that Dixie Lee burst into a fury! She was struggling in Ella's arms as one fighting off an unseen foe. I stood back, uncertain whether or not to interfere. But now Dixie's angry energy rose to a storm. Her wrenchings became violent. I feared she would injure Ella. A chair was knocked over and Dixie was snarling like a maddened cat. Finally, with a savage jerk, she tore herself out of Ella's arms and in the flick of an eye Dixie Lee had sprung at my throat! Digging her nails into the flesh, her fingers tightened like iron bands, she got a strangle hold on me.

In a moment I was struggling for my life, there, in that stark dressing room at the Crystal Slipper.

Dixie and I stepped forward and back, in a swaying movement, like shadows in a mad dance. The girl had the strength of five men. It was astonishing. I felt myself weakening. I had to call on every ounce of my power. Dixie was assuredly possessed. Ella watched us, dumfounded. Either she *could* not cry out or—she dared not.

From beyond came the laughter of revellers and the gay syncopation of music. But we three, Ella, Dixie and I, were as people in a separate world. Hemmed in by the bleak dressing room walls, we seemed forgotten by mankind. I had the uneasy sense that only forces other than human were concerned with us.

Gradually, as I pitted my strength against the demonic fury of Dixie Lee, her rage let down. Had it held out much longer, I don't know what would have happened. At one point her fingers had been definitely shutting off my wind.

Though I was not conscious of it during the heat of our struggle, I remembered later—so I suppose it did register on me during the action—that Dixie's face had been unrecognizably distorted. . . .

When Dixie did collapse, it was with breath-taking suddenness. Another moment, and she lay limp in my arms, the fire out of her, sobbing broken-heartedly.

"How do you feel, now?" I asked.

"I wish I were dead!"

I looked at Ella. "Shall we call a doctor?"

"No, no! No doctor can help me," and the hopelessness of Dixie's voice wrenched my heart.

**E**LLA'S eyes gave me no encouraging sign. She was utterly panic-stricken. "We'd better clear out of here fast," I thought to myself.

A creak made me swing around toward the door, quickly enough to see it snap closed! I ran over to it, pulled it open and, looking down the corridor, I saw a black shadow, reminiscent of Raoul Murtha, disappear into the wineroom!

Had his eyes been dominating the mad scene I had just gone through with Dixie? What sort of a man was this?

I turned to the girls.

"I'll see you home," I said, "since I'm really a neighbor." Stubbornly, Dixie repeated: "But Raoul expects us."

It was on the tip of my tongue to say what I thought about Raoul, but I realized it would not help matters. Nevertheless, I was absolutely sure that on no account would I let Ella go off on a frolic with this strange man with the sabre cut. I had seen and heard too much, and I did not like Dixie's stubbornness.

"It's folly to step out with that man—after what's hap-

pened," I said crisply, hoping to overawe them both by my certainty.

"But we promised!" There was an agony in Dixie's voice. No one would have guessed her for the slangy, breezy girl of less than a half hour ago.

Ella looked questioningly from Dixie to me. In a whisper she said, "It's true. Murtha would be slow to forgive—"

That was too much for me. The girls were evidently in the backwash of hysteria. It was up to me to get normal action to the fore. Almost bodily I forced them into their outer wraps and urged them to quit the Crystal Slipper at once. "You need a change of scenery," I announced.

We were half way down the corridor, when Dixie stopped short. "It's no use," she said. "He would follow us."

This time I was careful how I worded my pleadings. I knew, now, that I was not dealing with a person in full mental control. But Dixie shook her head and would not budge. I saw that her eyes were not on me, and when I followed the direction of their gaze, I caught sight of Murtha himself!

Out of the furthestmost end of the corridor, from what seemed the kitchen, he suddenly emerged. In a flash of light, from an open broiler perhaps, I saw his face as he came through a swinging door. At the time I had the odd fancy that flames were lapping about his head. . . .

HE came up leisurely, moving very gracefully, a debonaire jauntiness in his gait. The corridor became electric with the hostility of his presence.

Dixie was atremble. For a moment I expected her to relapse into a fit. Ella took a frightened step nearer to me. She seemed struggling not to look in the direction of Murtha. "Steady, there," I said in a low voice, as much to reassure myself as the girls.

Raoul Murtha stopped before Dixie Lee. He riveted her eyes with his, and to my amazement, said very glibly:

"It's very graceless of you to discuss abandoning my party."

"I'm sorry," I heard Dixie answer, in the docile voice of a whipped child. Ella was regarding me beseechingly. I understood she wished me to interfere. What to do, I was not quite sure.

I stepped between Dixie and Murtha, saying, "The young ladies have asked me to take them home."

Murtha peered sharply at me, his pitch black eyes boring into me. It was my impression that their brightness was increasing—as gas lights do when the cock is turned on gradually. It was difficult to keep a hold on myself, fascinated as I was by the strangely growing brightness of his eyes. I had to grit my teeth to force my alertness.

It was the sight of tears in Ella's eyes which finally restored my self-mastery. At her distress, my control swept back in a surge. And on its crest my confidence returned. I smiled at Murtha. For now I was feeling a cocksureness. I believed this man with the sabre cut had no dominance over me. I felt within myself the power to withstand him, and I returned his stare as hard as I could. He nodded his head slightly and said:

"I don't like you, James Haskell."

It was by no means a simple statement. His words carried a threat. But I held my ground, replying, "Nevertheless, the young ladies are coming with me."

"They may do as they please—for the present—" and innuendo rode his words. Humming a bar of music, he walked quickly away. I noticed that instead of returning to the main hall where the beat of jazz was now shaking the walls, he turned to the right and vanished into the wine-room.

I was on the verge of following, for I had my own curiosity about that winery, when Ella held me back.

"What's his business in there?" I asked.

"Oh, don't ask me what I don't know anything about. We'd better go immediately!" Ella sounded paucity all

right. By now there was no doubt about her anxiety to leave.

Dixie Lee was more readily persuaded this time. In less than three minutes we were on our way. As we started across Fifty-sixth Street, toward the subway station, a huge Isotta Fraschini brushed by us.

"That's Murtha's car," whispered Ella to me.

I felt a clutching tightness in my throat and wished heartily that I had not seen him and his look of hatred as he shot past.

Once in the subway, we all felt safer. Dixie leaned against Ella's shoulder and slept through most of the trip.

Ella and I talked. I could not take my eyes from her face. More and more, her beauty was captivating me. It had such softness, it seemed more like the reflection of a soul than the brazen physical beauty one sees so often on Broadway. I could have sat for hours listening to her, my eyes all the time entranced with her glory.

And yet, though absorbed in Ella's charms, I drank in her words eagerly. A tale, breath-taking to me, rose from her anecdotes concerning her great-grandfather, James Stephens Bixbee. A strange tale, indeed. The more she spoke, the more I marveled at certain startling coincidences.

I learned that the house I was living in was on land that had once belonged to her family! The Bixbees had held it for over eighty years. In 1917, the land and the old Bixbee mansion were sold to my landlord who tore down the mansion and built the house I had rented. But my astonishment passed all bounds when I heard from Ella that all the Bixbee furniture had been sold at an antique auction—with the exception of an old workbench which was later moved into the attic of the new house!

"It's a tale of magic!" I cried. "I'm probably using that very workbench right now."

I was profoundly stirred. Untold implications crowded into my mind. The ghostly messages, the copper plate and its code, the ghost itself—I felt on the point of a discovery.

Carefully, I described the workbench to Ella, restraining as much as possible the elation I felt.

"It is the same! Oh, it's thrilling. To think you live in that house on the land on which I was born and brought up!"

Ella's face glowed with excitement, but she could not even guess the pitch of my emotion. I was beginning to see a pattern running through all my experiences. . . .

"What did your great-grandfather do?" I asked.

"It's hard to say; he was a sort of inventor."

"Inventor?"

"He spent most of his time at that old workbench, putting things together."

"Don't you remember any more. Some details?"

Ella pondered a moment; her pretty white forehead crinkled with the effort to recall.

"NOW that I think of it," she said finally, "in a talk one day he told me he had really invented telegraphy."

"Telegraphy!" I could no longer restrain my voice. My heart raced. Items were grouping themselves in my mind. I could see the jumping copper plate . . . Ella's great-grandfather . . . telegraphy . . . Crystal Slipper. . . . A chain was forming!

"He used to say that if he hadn't been negligent and delayed for three months in sending his patent papers to Washington, he would have had his patent through before Mr. Morse."

"That's most amazing. It almost makes clear to me—But tell me, Ella, did he ever learn the Morse Code?"

Ella laughed. Her silvery voice gladdened me, and even in my eagerness to hear her answer I stopped to enjoy the last ripple of her voice.

"I'm laughing, Jim," she said, "because it's funny you should ask me that."

"Not as funny as you think."

"Anyway, I can tell you he did. When I was nine years old he made me memorize the Morse Code. He even rigged

up a telegraph system between the attic where he worked and an old barn we had, and I had to stay in the barn and take and send messages to him."

And again she laughed, as happy as a child over her old memories. But though I laughed with her, a new idea throbbed in my head insistently. Her great-grandfather, his love for Ella, the Morse Code, the workbench, the ghost—what was the connection?

At our station we awakened Dixie. Almost immediately she was her bright self again.

"Wow! Have you two been holding hands over my snoring body?" she cried.

We were joking with Dixie as we left the subway. At the first crossing Dixie dropped her purse. We had gone on a few steps before I was aware of her loss and looked back to see the bag lying in the middle of the road. Unthinkingly, I hopped after it. No sooner had I retrieved the purse than I heard a scream from Ella. Like a shot I sprang for the sidewalk, only just in time to save myself from being crushed by a huge, black automobile which hurtled past. And though there had scarcely been time for me to look at the machine, I had a mental vision of the uniformed Jap at the wheel, and in the back, the man with the sabre cut.

**A**CROSS the street I could see that Dixie's hand was covering her face and she was moaning, while Ella, as white as honey wax, was standing beside her, so frozen by her scare that she was unable to move. I looked carefully up and down the road and then recrossed it to the girls.

"It's all right, Dixie," I said. "I'm not dead yet."

Slowly she pulled her hand away from her eyes.

"It was he!" she breathed in terror, as we started on.

I asked her no questions. It was no time for discussion. Ella looked ill, on the verge of fainting.

At a white, green-trimmed cottage on Chestnut Lane, we stopped. Ella fumbled for her keys, but the door was opened by an old lady who was introduced to me as Ella's aunt.

"I expected you would be later than this," she said in surprise.

"Our plans changed," Ella replied.

"I'm glad; I was so worried about him," said the old lady and I recognized, even in her voice, that special fear of him.

By the time I returned to my home, which was a short distance away, I was feverish to follow up the disclosures of the evening. What Ella had told me on the subway gave me a definite clue.

I was determined to follow it through that very night. I knew I would be unable to sleep anyway. Immediate action was essential. It was clear that through some unknown correlation I had become involved in a struggle with a sinister power. It threatened not only the girl I loved, but my own security as well, and it was up to me to destroy it.

Time was, indeed, short. The speed and effectiveness of Raoul Murtha's power were no longer to be doubted. He had given sufficient proof. Nothing seemed impossible to the man. And that he was the enemy, I did not doubt.

I could not get it out of my head that I had an important clue to hand in the three interrelated facts:

First: The workbench and its history.

Second: The ghost I had twice seen in my attic.

Third: The tapping copper plate and its telegraphic code. Somewhere in these lay the truth, if I could properly combine them.

The moment I let myself into my house, I pocketed my latchkey and went on tiptoe to the attic. The place looked cavernous, and in the dancing light of the swinging electric

bulb, weird shadows spun round the walls fantastically.

Switching off the electric light I sat down at my workbench. I fingered the copper plate which still lay where I had held it on the first occasion of a message.

For perhaps half an hour I sat waiting. Nothing happened. I hesitated to try hammering on the plate as I had previously done. Any noise would surely wake my family.

It was very quiet. After a while I became drowsy. My head fell on my arm and I must have slept. Queer, tumbled dreams rushed in on me. Horrible visions of tall, dark men with sabre slashes on their faces; nimble-footed Japs with gleaming knives; huge, rushing automobiles—and through-out them all the agonized cries for help in Ella's voice wrenched tantalizingly at my heart, while all the time I sat as one bound, unable to respond.

Panting and perspiring, I shook off my sleep to awake to a furious metallic tattoo. The copper plate was at its ghostly tapping again. A message! In the moonlight I reached for a pencil and pad. There was a moment's rest; then, the copper plate drummed off into its hopping staccato. I made out: E-L-L-A-D-A-N-G-E-R-N-O-W.

Ella in danger! Now! I waited not a second longer. My heart could guess the rest. I sprang to my feet, and hurried down to my room, paying no attention this time to the noise I was making. In a bureau drawer I had an old army revolver. I looked it over. It was loaded. Slipping it into my pocket, I dashed out of the house, into the moonlit night.

**D**OWN our street I raced, praying I would be in time. A deadly stillness hung over everything. I was imagining all sorts of things—terrible possibilities. The copper plate had been right before. . . .

When I hit Chestnut Lane, I went around the fenced bend like a greyhound. Every step seemed half as fast as I wanted to make it. Only when I was within about a hundred feet of Ella's cottage did I slow up. But once I began checking my speed, I began to lose confidence. The more I thought of what I was to do, the more I slowed up. What was there ahead of me? Did I know? Everything considered, I was not sure whether I was acting reasonably. Ella Bixbee's cottage looked tranquil enough in the moonlight.

I eased into a walk and rounded the house. Suddenly my heart did a loop. There was a ladder up against the far side of the cottage, and on it a shadow. No, more than a shadow. A hunched figure!

Slowly, stealthily, the hunched figure was making upward lurches, rung by rung, with the peculiar gait of an orang-outang. Slowly, pausing at each step, it went. Like a jungle beast on the hunt.

I crouched in the shadow of a hedgerow, my hands beating against my body in nervous excitement. The stooped head of the figure moved upward, into the flood of moonlight. It was a grotesque head, and yet oddly reminiscent. I felt I should know it. There was something familiar in its very repulsiveness.

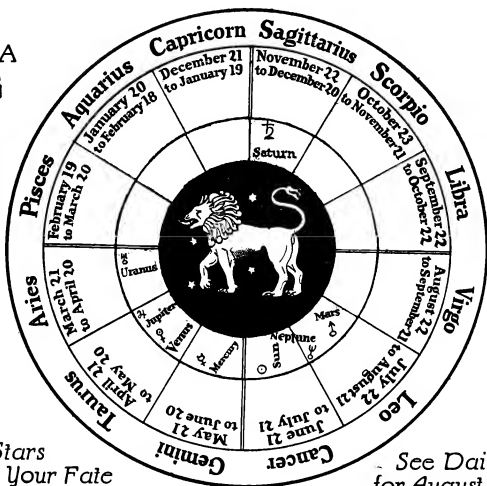
My hand sprang to my revolver. I drew it. And as I raised it, to fire at the gruesome figure, I saw Ella Bixbee at the window, her golden hair a heavenly aureole in the soft wash of the moon.

She was in a white nightgown and her eyes were shut. I saw the figure raise his hands, saw Ella bend her head out toward him, leaning over the windowsill—bending until her gleaming hair hung straight before her face. The hands of the hunched figure closed over her shoulder—and I stood there horrified, helpless, frozen, afraid to fire now, lest I hit Ella Bixbee!

*Profane hands have caught the lovely dancer in a pitiless grip while her lover stands by, powerless to aid her. Only forces other than human can save the situation. The ancient ghost has intervened before—did his last warning come too late? Don't fail to read the astounding outcome of Ella Bixbee's tragic plight. It will appear in the September issue of GHOST STORIES, on sale at all news stands August 23rd.*

# Were You Born in August?

By  
STELLA  
KING



Let the Stars  
Indicate Your Fate

See Daily Guide  
for August, page 84

**T**HE August-born are children of the sun. If your birthday comes between July 22nd and August 21st, you are under the special protection of the sun and are marked by its characteristics. The sun is at home in the sign of Leo, the Lion, and at this time of the year the earth is in the full bloom of maturity, ready for the harvest which ensures continuance of life through the winter, or dormant period of nature.

As a child of the giver of life, joy and happiness, you are positive and vital, generous, loyal and magnanimous. You like to see others happy and are always ready to help them to find success and to enjoy that feeling of contentment which follows upon achievement.

You are a clever organizer and understand the capacity of other people. You have a real flair for choosing the most suitable person for whatever work is to be done and you know how to give an order. There are certain temperaments that seem immediately to arouse antagonism in others, but the sun people are born leaders and meet with ready and willing co-operation on the part of their followers. You are intended to be a center of activity and counsel and your gift for organization enables you to give aim and direction to the efforts of others.

Every Leo child who makes the most of his opportunities reflects a bit of sunshine and is a center of vital attraction and warmth.

But there is also the negative side of Leo. This is evident in those who have not yet learned to think for others but are absorbed in themselves. Such characters are bombastic, vain and tyrannical. They are the show-offs, who

try to bluff their way through life. But even in these people there is present a form of generosity—however perverted. They will give away everything they possess to those who flatter them enough to gratify their desire for personal power and popularity. They may be good fellows, but they lack a sense of responsibility and are unreliable. Yet, if found out in a mistake, they will always admit it. In fact, the Leo character seldom holds a grudge.

All Leonians have so many good points that it is usually easy to forgive their mistakes. In more serious cases, however, when definite reform is necessary, they can usually be appealed to through their affections.

Both the men and women of Leo make splendid entertainers and perfect hosts and hostesses. They seem to know how to put other people at ease and create an atmosphere of hospitality. In the business world they frequently become presidents of large concerns, and in the theater they are both happy and successful. As inventors they have also been known to achieve distinction.

Being a Leo, you may suffer many disappointments because you are loyal and affectionate by nature. But although others may fail you time and again, it is unlikely that you will ever become bitter. Always you will find good somewhere and even should one person disappoint you, you are too warm-hearted to withhold your love from others.

You belong in the category of fire and, like all fire people, are quick tempered; but your stormy scenes are soon over and, in most cases, you are willing to take the first step toward reconciliation.

As the heart is ruled by Leo, (Continued on page 84)

# What the Stars Foretell for Every Day This Month

Below are given the planetary indications for each day in August.

Let them guide you to happiness

1. A favorable day for writing and study, but unfavorable for health and business. Avoid disputes and risk of accident. The evening is conducive to creative work, invention and psychic affairs.

2. Attend to matters connected with the sea, with liquids, oil and psychic phenomena—in the early morning if possible. Do not ask favors. Elderly people should rest. The evening is adverse for partnerships and brings danger from explosives, electricity and fire.

3. A good business day. Start work early and get as much done as possible. Take up important matters. Favorable for salesmanship, finance and collecting money. Make changes if necessary. One of the best days this month. Commence new undertakings.

4. Spend the afternoon quietly. New moon.

5. Favorable for house-cleaning, baking and all home duties, for leasing and buying as an investment but not as a speculation. Social and artistic affairs should be successful. A day of good news. Write and attend to correspondence.

6. A day for making contracts and winning success in social and artistic affairs. Buy clothing and jewelry and things to beautify the home. Expect success in transactions having to do with oil, perfumes, confections and clothing.

7. Take up matters that demand originality and good judgment. A successful day for the automobile trade and for motorists. Beware of possible accidents in the evening.

8. Attend to important correspondence and matters that require concentration. Rest and relax at the end of the day.

9. Advertise and attend to matters which require energy and decision. Get things started, ask favors, seek employment and promotion and commence undertakings. A very good business day. Buy and sell.

10. Visit relatives, travel, write, buy shoes and clothing. Favorable for psychic matters.

11. Favorable for family, social and religious affairs. Vibrations are adverse in the evening.

12. Vibrations today give energy. Get things done quickly, but avoid accident and dispute.

13. Stick to routine matters. Avoid gossip and discount claims of promoters and speculators. Advertise.

14. Advertise and seek publicity but avoid partnerships and risks in the evening. Be discreet and keep your temper.

15. A successful day for anything to do with liquids or oil. Go to the theater or see a good motion picture. Housewives should get their canning done.

16. An adverse day for friendship and partnership. Associate with elderly people and be careful what you eat. Buy household necessities.

17. A good day for buying and for mechanical affairs.

18. Spend the day in religious observance and relaxation. Avoid family discussions.

19. Unexpected developments are probable. Use good judgment and avoid hasty decisions. Visit elderly people in the evening.

20. Full moon. Be practical in your outlook. Secret dealings may be brought to light and may surprise you. Postpone important decisions.

21. Do nothing of importance.

22. A disappointing day. Stick to routine and beware of possible accidents in connection with traffic or fire.

23. Avoid excitement and danger. The afternoon and evening are favorable for invention and financial matters.

24. Adverse for speculation. Be conservative in buying during the afternoon. Ask favors and seek publicity this evening and tomorrow morning.

25. Early morning is the best part of this day.

26. Unimportant. The evening is favorable for social and emotional matters.

27. A busy day, but disappointing in results. Ask no favors. Successful for mechanical work. Avoid gossip and publicity.

28. Sell but do not buy. Favorable for legal, educational and religious affairs. Avoid danger of taking cold during the next few days while Saturn is stationary.

29. Stick to facts and ask for proof of statements. Be careful what you sign. Avoid excitement in the evening.

30. Expect the unexpected; make no changes, and spend the day quietly.

31. Afternoon and evening favorable for social and artistic affairs and for correspondence and writing. Buy clothing, furniture or dishes. Make and carry out plans for enterprise and travel, answer advertisements and take steps to further your interests. Vibrations are very good.

## Were You Born in August?

(Continued from page 83)

you are susceptible in more ways than one. Therefore, during the early forties you should be careful not to place yourself under an excessive strain of work or unnecessary excitement. Your will is very powerful and many people of your type overtax their physical strength by sheer force of will. Such exertion, if continued, is likely to affect the heart's action.

The ruby—or lover's stone—is your talisman and if you are a woman you should also wear a string of amber beads. Gold, of course, belongs to the sun and your talisman should, therefore, be set in gold.

There are interesting legends and beliefs about both the ruby and amber. The Brahmin in India wears a ruby to insure safety, while certain savage tribes insert this stone into their flesh because they believe that no spear can then harm

them—at least in that portion of the body in which the ruby is set.

AN ancient legend also tells us that three eggs were once laid by a serpent and that, when hatched, there came out of them—the Mogul of Pag, the sacred Emperor of China and the ruby mines of Burma. This indicates the value placed on the ruby in ancient times. Indeed, it was considered lord of all the gems and more precious than the emerald or the diamond. Magicians believed that it possessed the power to cause water to boil. It was also a symbol of reincarnation.

Amber has a particularly interesting history and references to it are to be found in records of great antiquity. Real amber is fossilized resin from an extinct species of pine and was venerated as a talisman during the Stone Age. Its

medicinal uses have been many and varied. It is said to preventague, digestive troubles, catarrh, jaundice, deafness and attacks of erysipelas. The women of Lombardy wore it as a charm to prevent goiter.

The use of amber as a mouthpiece for pipes and cigarette holders arises from the belief that it will not transmit infection. It is also said to be of value to a child in teething.

Of course, all this may be relegated to the realm of superstition by the orthodox. Yet, is it not possible that these beliefs in the effect of some stones and metals upon certain parts of the body may be founded upon truths known at one time and since lost? Are we not just beginning to revise our theories in the light of new discoveries? Doctor Abrams has conclusively proved that each substance and each organ in



by this shadow from Saturn are the sixteenth of June, March and December. Therefore, anyone born on or about one of these dates should take care not to get cold or overtired. As money is usually scarce when Saturn is in power, these people should also practice a little economy. The Saturn ray will be especially powerful about August 12th.

Mars is now stirring the Virgo-born into activity and advising them to get

themselves into good physical shape and prepare for possible expense. Those born in the early '80's should be prepared for emergency and should guard against accidents in traffic.

The Gemini's are due to enjoy a period of prosperity, as Jupiter, the lord of plenty, is now passing through their sign. As Venus also is there, life should go merrily for them in so far as general circumstances are concerned. Even if

there are difficulties predicted in their horoscopes, the presence of the planets will still be helpful because Jupiter and Venus will give the Gemini's fortitude, assistance from friends and a hopeful point of view. October Librans and February Aquarians share the good fortune of Gemini.

Neptune has now definitely crossed the border from Leo to Virgo. His influence will be considered next month.

## The Woman at Seven Brothers

(Continued from page 15)

took care not to do, I can tell you, and that was to knock on his door till I'd made certain he wasn't below in the living-room—though I was tempted to.

Yes, sir; that's a queer thing, and I wouldn't tell you if I hadn't set out to give you the truth. Night after night, stopping there on the landing in the black pit, the air gone out of my lungs and the surf drumming in my ears and sweat standing cold on my neck—and one hand lifting up in the air—God forgive me, sir! Maybe I did wrong not to look at her more, drooping about her work in her gingham apron, with her hair stringing.

When the Inspector came off with the tender, that time, I told him I was through. That's when he took the dislike to me, I guess, for he looked at me kind of sneering and said, soft as I was, I'd have to put up with it till next relief. And then, said he, there'd be a whole house-cleaning at Seven Brothers, because he'd gotten Fedderson the berth at Kingdom Come. And with that he slapped the old man on the back.

I WISH you could have seen Fedderson, sir. He sat down on my cot as if his knees had given way. You'd think he'd be happy, with all his dreams come true. Yes, he was happy, beaming all over—for a minute. Then, sir, he began to shrivel up. It was like seeing a man cut down in his prime before your eyes. He began to wag his head.

"No," said he. "No, no; it's not for such as me. I'm good enough for Seven Brothers, and that's all, Mr. Bayliss. That's all."

And for all the Inspector could say that's what he stuck to. He'd figured himself a martyr so many years, nursed that injustice like a mother with her first-born, sir; and now in his old age, so to speak, they weren't to rob him of it. Fedderson was going to wear out his life in a second-class light and folks would talk—that was his idea. I heard him hailing down as the tender was casting off.

"See you tomorrow, Mr. Bayliss. Yep. Coming shore with the wife for a spree. Anniversary. Yep."

But he didn't sound much like a spree. They had robbed him, partly, after all. I wondered what she thought about it. I didn't know till night. She didn't show up to supper, which Fedderson and I got ourselves—had a headache, he said. It was my early watch. I went and lit

up and came back to read a spell. He was finishing off the Jacob's-ladder, and thoughtful, like a man that's lost a treasure. Once or twice I caught him looking about the room on the sly. It was pathetic, sir.

Going up the second time, I stepped out on the walk-around to have a look at things. She was there on the seaward side, wrapped in that silky thing. A fair sea was running across the ledge and it was coming on a little thick—not too thick. Off to the right the Boston boat was blowing, *whroom-whroom!* Creeping up on us, quarter-speed. There was another fellow behind her, and a fisherman's conch farther offshore.

I don't know why, but I stopped beside her and leaned on the rail. She didn't appear to notice me, one way or another. We stood and we stood, listening to the whistles, and the longer we stood the more it got on my nerves, her not noticing me. I suppose she'd been too much on my mind lately. I began to be put out. I scraped my feet. I coughed. By and by I said out loud:

"Look here, I guess I better get out the fog-horn and give those fellows a toot."

"Why?" said she, without moving her head—calm as that.

"Why?" It gave me a turn, sir. For a minute I stared at her. "Why? Because if she don't pick up this light before very many minutes she'll be too close in to wear—tide'll have her on the rocks—that's why!"

I couldn't see her face, but I could see one of her silk shoulders lift a little, like a shrug. And there I kept on staring at her, a dumb one, sure enough. I know what brought me to was hearing the Boston boat's three sharp toots as she picked up the light—mad as anything—and swung her helm aport. I turned away from her, sweat stringing down my face, and walked around to the door. It was just as well, too, for the feed-pipe was plugged in the lamp and the wicks were popping. She'd have been out in another five minutes, sir.

When I'd finished, I saw that woman standing in the doorway. Her eyes were bright. I had a horror of her, sir, a living horror.

"If only the light had been out," said she, low and sweet.

"God forgive you," said I. "You don't know what you're saying."

She went down the stair into the well, winding out of sight, and as long as I could see her, her eyes were watching

mine. When I went, myself, after a few minutes, she was waiting for me on that first landing, standing still in the dark. She took hold of my hand, though I tried to get it away.

"Good-by," said she in my ear.

"Good-by?" said I. I didn't understand.

"You heard what he said today—about Kingdom Come? Be it so—on his own head, I'll never come back here. Once I set foot ashore—I've got friends in Brightonboro, Ray."

I got away from her and started on down. But I stopped. "Brightonboro?" I whispered back. "Why do you tell me?" My throat was raw to the words, like a sore.

"So you'd know," said she.

WELL, sir, I saw them off next morning, down that new Jacob's-ladder into the dinghy-boat, her in a dress of blue velvet and him in his best cutaway and derby—rowing away, smaller and smaller, the two of them. And then I went back and sat on my cot, leaving the door open and the ladder still hanging down the wall, along with the boat falls.

I don't know whether it was relief, or what. I suppose I must have been worked up even more than I'd thought those past weeks, for now it was all over I was like a rag. I got down on my knees, sir, and prayed to God for the salvation of my soul, and when I got up and climbed to the living-room it was half-past twelve by the clock. There was rain on the windows and the sea was running blue-black under the sun. I'd sat there all that time not knowing there was a squall.

It was funny; the glass stood high, but those black squalls kept coming and going all afternoon, while I was at work up in the light-room. And I worked hard, to keep myself busy. First thing I knew it was five, and no sign of the boat yet. It began to get dim and kind of purplish-gray over the land. The sun was down. I let up, made everything snug, and got out the night-glasses to have another look for the boat. He'd said he intended to get back before five. No sign. And then, standing there, it came over me that of course he wouldn't be coming off—he'd be hunting her, poor old fool. It looked like I had to stand two men's watches that night.

Never mind. I felt like my old self again, even if I hadn't had any din-



ner or supper. Pride came to me that night on the walk-around, watching the boats go by—little boats, big boats, the Boston boat with all her pearls and her dance-music. They couldn't see me; they didn't know who I was; but to the last of them, they depended on me. They say a man must be born again. Well, I was born again. I breathed deep in the wind.

Dawn broke hard and red as a dying coal. I put out the light and started to go below. Born again; yes, sir. I felt so good I whistled in the well, and when I came to the first floor on the stair I reached out in the dark to give it a rap for luck. And then, sir, the hair prickled all over my scalp, when I found my hand just going on and on through the air, the same as it had gone once before, and all of a sudden I wanted to yell, because I thought I was going to touch flesh. It's funny what their just forgetting to close their door did to me, isn't it?

Well, I reached for the latch and pulled it to with a bang and ran down as if a ghost was after me. I got up some coffee and bread and bacon for breakfast. I drank the coffee. But somehow I couldn't eat, all along of that open door. The light in the room was blood. I got to thinking. I thought how she'd talked about those men, women and children on the rocks, and how she'd made to bathe her hands over the rail. I almost jumped out of my chair then; it seemed for a wink she was there beside the stove watching me with that queer half-smile—really, I seemed to see her for a flash across the red tablecloth in the red light of dawn.

"Look here!" said I to myself, sharp enough; and then I gave myself a good laugh and went below. There I took a look out of the door, which was still open, with the ladder hanging down. I made sure to see the poor old fool come pulling around the point before very long now.

My boots were hurting a little, and taking them off, I lay down on the cot to rest, and somehow I went to sleep. I had horrible dreams. I saw her again standing in that blood-red kitchen, and she seemed to be washing her hands, and the surf on the ledge was whining up the tower, louder and louder all the time, and what it whined was "Night after night—night after night." What woke me was the cold water in my face.

The storeroom was in gloom. That scared me at first; I thought night had come, and remembered the light. But then I saw the gloom was of a storm. The floor was shining wet, and the water in my face was spray, flung up through the open door. When I ran to close it, it almost made me dizzy to see the gray-and-white breakers striking past. The land was gone; the sky shut down heavy overhead; there was a piece of wreckage on the back of a swell, and that Jacob's-ladder was carried clean away. How that sea had picked up so quick I can't think. I looked at my watch and it wasn't four in the afternoon yet.

When I closed the door, sir, it was almost dark in the storeroom. I'd never been in the Light before in a gale of wind. I wondered why I was shivering

so, till I found it was the floor below me shivering, and the walls and stairs. Horrible crunchings and grindings ran away up the tower, and now and then there was a great thud somewhere, like a cannon-shot in a cave. I tell you, sir, I was alone, and I was in a mortal fright for a minute or so. And yet I had to get myself together. There was the light up there not tended to, and an early dark coming on and a heavy night and all, and I had to go. And I had to pass that door.

"You'll say it's foolish, sir, and maybe it *was* foolish. Maybe it was because I hadn't eaten. But I began thinking of that door up there the minute I set foot on the stair, and all the way up through that howling dark well I dreaded to pass it. I told myself I wouldn't stop. I didn't stop. I felt the landing underfoot and I went on, four steps, five—and then I couldn't. I turned and went back. I put out my hand and it went on into nothing. That door, sir, was open again.

I left it be; I went on up to the light-room and set to work. It was Bedlam there, sir, screeching Bedlam, but I took no notice. I kept my eyes down. I trimmed those seven wicks, sir, as neat as ever they were trimmed; I polished the brass till it shone, and I dusted the lens. It wasn't till that was done that I let myself look back to see who it was standing there, half out of sight in the well. It was her, sir.

"WHERE'D you come from?" I asked.

I remember my voice was sharp.

"Up Jacob's-ladder," said she, and hers was like the syrr of flowers.

I shook my head. I was savage, sir. "The ladder's carried away."

"I cast it off," said she, with a smile.

"Then," said I, "you must have come while I was asleep." Another thought came on me heavy as a ton of lead. "And where's he?" I gasped. "Where's the boat?"

"He's drowned," said she, as easy as that. "And I've come back for you—beloved. I cast the boat adrift and called, but you didn't hear me."

"But look here," said I. "If you came through the storeroom, why didn't you wake me up? Tell me that." It sounds foolish enough, me standing like a lawyer in court, trying to prove she *couldn't* be there.

She didn't answer for a moment. I guess she sighed, though I couldn't hear for the gale, and her eyes grew soft, sir, so soft.

"I couldn't," said she. "You looked so peaceful—dear one."

My cheeks and neck went hot, sir, as if a warm iron was laid on them. I didn't know what to say. I began to stammer. "What do you mean?" but she was going back down the stair, out of sight. My God! sir, and I used not to think she was good-looking!

I started to follow her. I wanted to know what she meant. Then I said to myself, "If I don't go—if I wait here—she'll come back." And I went to the weather side and stood looking out of the window. Not that there was much to see. It was growing dark, and the Seven Brothers looked like the mane of a running horse, a great, vast, white horse running into the wind. The air

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was awelter with it. I caught one peep of a fisherman, lying flat trying to weather the ledge, and I said, "God help them all tonight," and then I went hot at the sound of that "God."

I WAS right about her, though. She was back again. I wanted her to speak first, before I turned, but she wouldn't. I didn't hear her go out; I didn't know what she was up to till I saw her coming outside on the walk-around, drenched wet already. I pounded on the glass for her to come in and not be a fool; if she heard, she gave no sign of it.

There she stood, and there I stood watching her. Lord, sir—was it just that I'd never had eyes to see? Or are there women who bloom? Her clothes were shining on her, like a carving, and her hair was let down like a golden curtain tossing and streaming in the gale, and there she stood with her lips half open, drinking, and her eyes half closed, gazing straight away over the Seven Brothers, and her shoulders swaying, as if in tune with the wind and water and all the ruin. And when I looked at her hands over the rail, sir, they were moving in each other as if they bathed, and then I remembered, sir.

A cold horror took me. I knew now why she had come back again. She wasn't a woman—she was a devil. I turned my back on her. I said to myself:

"It's time to light up. You've got to light up—like that, over and over, out loud. My hand was shivering so I could hardly find a match; and when I scratched it, it only flared a second and then went out in the back draught from the open door. She was standing in the doorway, looking at me. It's queer, sir, but I felt like a child caught in mischief.

"I—I—was going to light up," I managed to say, finally.

"Why?" said she. No, I can't say it as she did.

"Why?" said I. "My God!"

She came nearer, laughing, as if with pity, low, you know.

I drew back from her. All I could say anything about was the light.

"Why not the dark?" said she. "Dark is softer than light—tenderer—dearer than light. From the dark up here, away up here in the wind and storm, we can watch the ships go by, you and I. And you love me so. You've loved me so long, Ray."

"I never have!" I struck out at her. "I don't! I don't!"

Her voice was lower than ever, but there was the same laughing pify in it. "Oh, yes, you have." And she was near me again.

"I have?" I yelled. "I'll show you! I'll show you if I have!"

I got another match, sir, and scratched it on the brass. I gave it to the first wick, the little wick that's inside all the others. It bloomed like a yellow flower. "I have?" I yelled, and gave it to the next.

Then there was a shadow, and I saw she was leaning beside me, her two elbows on the brass, her two arms stretched out above the wicks, her bare

forearms and wrists and hands. I gave a gasp:

"Take care! You'll burn them! For God's sake——"

She didn't move or speak. The match burned my fingers and went out, and all I could do was stare at those arms of hers, helpless. I'd never noticed her arms before. They were rounded and graceful and covered with a soft down like a breath of gold. Then I heard her speaking close to my ear.

"Pretty arms," she said. "Pretty arms!"

I turned. Her eyes were fixed on mine. They seemed heavy, as if with sleep, and yet between their lids they were two wells, deep and deep, and as if they held all the things I'd ever thought or dreamed in them. I looked away from them, at her lips. Her lips were red as poppies, heavy with redness. They moved, and I heard them speaking:

"Poor boy, you love me so, and you want to kiss me—don't you?"

"No," said I. But I couldn't turn around. I looked at her hair. I'd always thought it was stringy hair. Some hair curls naturally with damp, they say, and perhaps that was it, for there were pearls of wet on it, and it was thick and shimmering around her face, making soft shadows by the temples. There was green in it, queer strands of green like braids.

"What is it?" said I.

"Nothing but weed," said she, with that slow, sleepy smile.

SOMEHOW or other I felt calmer, than I had any time. "Look here," said I. "I'm going to light this lamp." I took out a match, scratched it, and touched the third wick. The flame ran around, bigger than the other two together. But still her arms hung there. I bit my lip. "By God, I will!" said I to myself, and I lit the fourth.

It was fierce, sir, fierce! And yet those arms never trembled. I had to look around at her. Her eyes were still looking into mine, so deep, and her red lips were still smiling with that queer, sleepy droop; the only thing that that tears were raining down her cheeks—big, glowing, round, jewel tears. It wasn't human, sir. It was like a dream.

"Pretty arms," she sighed, and then, as if those words had broken something in her heart, there came a great sob bursting from her lips. To hear it drove me mad. I reached to drag her away, but she was too quick, sir; she cringed from me and slipped out from between my hands. It was like she faded away, sir, and went down in a bundle, nursing her poor arms and mourning over them with those terrible, broken sobs.

The sound of them took the manhood out of me—you'd have been the same, sir. I knelt down beside her on the floor and covered my face.

"Please!" I moaned. "Please! Please!" That's all I could say. I wanted her to forgive me. I reached out a hand, blind, for forgiveness, and I couldn't find her anywhere. I had hurt her so, and she was afraid of me,

of me, sir, who loved her so deep it drove me crazy.

I could see her down the stair, though it was dim and my eyes were filled with tears. I stumbled after her, crying, "Please! Please!" The little wicks I'd lit were blowing in the wind from the door and smoking the glass beside them black. One went out. I pleaded with them, the same as I would plead with a human being. I said I'd be back in a second. I promised. And I went on down the stair, crying like a baby because I'd hurt her, and she was afraid of me—of me, sir.

SHE had gone into her room. The door was closed against me and I could hear her sobbing beyond it, brokenhearted. My heart was broken too. I beat on the door with my palms. I begged her to forgive me. I told her I loved her. And all the answer was that sobbing in the dark.

And then I lifted the latch and went in, groping, pleading. "Dearest—please! Because I love you!"

I heard her speak down near the floor. There wasn't any anger in her voice; nothing but sadness and despair.

"No," said she. "You don't love me, Ray. You never have."

"I do! I have!"

"No, no," said she, as if she was tired out:

"Where are you?" I was groping for her. I thought, and lit a match. She had got to the door and was standing there as if ready to fly. I went toward her, and she made me stop. She took my breath away. "I hurt your arms," said I, in a dream.

"No," said she, hardly moving her lips. She held them out to the match's light for me to look, and there was never a scar on them—not even that soft golden down was singed, sir. "You can't hurt my body," said she, sad as anything. "Only my heart, Ray; my poor heart."

I tell you again she took my breath away. I lit another match. "How can you be so beautiful?" I wondered.

She answered in riddles—but oh, the sadness of her, sir.

"Because," said she, "I've always so wanted to be."

"How come your eyes so heavy?" said I.

"Because I've seen so many things I never dreamed of," said she.

"How come your hair so thick?"

"It's the seaweed makes it thick,"

said she, smiling queer, queer.

"How come seaweed there?"

"Out of the bottom of the sea."

She talked in riddles, but it was like poetry to hear her, or a song.

"How come your lips so red?" said I.

"Because they've wanted so long to be kissed."

Fire was on me, sir. I reached out to catch her, but she was gone, out of the door and down the stair. I followed, stumbling. I must have tripped on the turn, for I remember going through the air and fetching up with a crash, and I didn't know anything for a spell—how long I can't say. When I came to, she was there, somewhere, bending over me, crooning, "My love—my love—" under her breath, like a song.

But then when I got up, she was not where my arms went; she was down the stair again, just ahead of me. I followed her. I was tottering and dizzy and full of pain. I tried to catch up with her in the dark of the storeroom, but she was too quick for me, sir, always a little quicker for me. Oh, she was cruel to me, sir. I kept bumping against things, hurting myself still worse, and it was cold and wet and a horrible noise all the while, sir; and then, sir, I found the door was open, and a sea had parted the hinges.

I don't know how it all went, sir. I'd tell you if I could, but it's all so blurred—sometimes it seems more like a dream. I couldn't find her any more; I couldn't hear her; I went all over, everywhere. Once, I remember, I found myself hanging out of that door between the davits, looking down into those big black seas and crying like a baby. It's all riddles and blur. I can't seem to tell you much, sir. It was all—all—I don't know.

I WAS talking to somebody else—not her. It was the Inspector. I hardly knew it was the Inspector. His face was as gray as a blanket, and his eyes were bloodshot, and his lips were twisted. His left wrist hung down, awkward. It was broken coming aboard the Light in that sea. Yes, we were in the living room. Yes, sir, it was daylight—gray daylight. I tell you, sir, the man looked crazy to me. He was waving his good arm toward the weather windows, and what he was saying over and over, was this:

*"Look what you done, damn you! Look what you done!"*

And what I was saying was this:

*"I've lost her!"*

I didn't pay any attention to him, nor him to me. By and by he did, though. He stopped his talking all of a sudden, and his eyes looked like the devil's eyes.

He put them up close to mine. He grabbed my arm with his good hand, and I cried, I was so weak.

"Johnson," said he, "is that it? By the living God—if you got a woman out here, Johnson!"

"No," said I. "I've lost her."

"What do you mean—lost her?"

"It was dark," said I—and it's funny how my head was clearing up—"and the door was open—the storeroom door—and I was after her—and I guess she stumbled, maybe—and I lost her."

"Johnson," said he, "what do you mean? You sound crazy—downright crazy. Who?"

"Her," said I. "Fedderson's wife."

"Who?"

"Her," said I. And with that he gave my arm another jerk.

"LISTEN," said he, like a tiger. "Don't try that on me. It won't do any good—that kind of lies—not where you're going to. Fedderson and his wife, too—the both of 'em's drowned dead'n a dornail."

"I know," said I, nodding my head. I was so calm it made him wild.

"You're crazy! Crazy as a loon, Johnson!" And he was chewing his lip red. "I know, because it was me that found the old man laying on Back Water Flats yesterday morning—me! And she'd beer with him in the boat, too, because he had a piece of her jacket tore off, tangled in his arm."

"I know," said I, nodding again.

"You know what, you crazy, murdering fool?" Those were his words to me, sir.

"I know," said I, "what I know."

"And I know," said he, "what I know."

And there you are, sir. He's Inspector. I'm—nobody.

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## Kidnapped by a Wraith

(Continued from page 19)

strange sound, something like mans running up an' down in bare feet. They make beeg noise! But when I come I find nobody dere."

"Where does that holc lead to?" I demanded. "Is there an underground room? Can it be reached from the cellar?"

"Mais oui," she replied. "We will look down dere now."

She got a lamp and led the way down a flight of worn steps into the cellar. On all sides I beheld a strange collection of oddities, while, fastened to the great beams above us, so that we had to duck our heads, were countless souvenirs of early battle fields—old-fashioned muskets, tomahawks, bows and arrows and a few powder horns.

Rats scurried frantically about us; the cellar seemed to be swarming with the vermin.

PRESENTLY we stopped before a heavy, impregnable looking door, set deeply in the wall. The hinges were rotten with rust and it was covered with cobwebs. Evidently it had not been opened for many years. A large iron ring served as a handle.

My guide put down the lamp on the floor and related, in her broken English, how many years ago, a number of murderous Indians, who had been convicted of pillage and rape, had been left to starve to death in this very dungeon.

I shuddered. I dared not contemplate the fate of the lovely innocent girl who had been carried down into the ghastly prison before us. Would we find her body mutilated beyond recognition? My heart nearly failed me at the thought. But although I dreaded the prospect of delving into the repulsive mysteries at the bottom of that black shaft, I could not bring myself to consent to a delay of even a few hours. Even if the girl were dead, we must rescue her body.

Resolutely I attacked the door with fierce energy, but it was not until the stalwart Madame Beauchamps had contributed her strength that we succeeded in getting it to budge. The protesting hinges squeaked loudly, as after a short struggle we forced it wide enough to pass through.

I was somewhat taken aback to behold, not the dungeon itself, but a flight of stone steps descending into impenetrable gloom. The subterranean chamber of death must be situated at the bottom.

Stark terror assailed me, but there was no going back now. I took the lamp and began a careful descent, followed by the strange woman who appeared to regard our nerve-racking expedition as inevitable. I marveled at her calmness. How could she, a woman, accompany me unhesitatingly into such a place? Could it be possible she did not realize that we were approaching the grave of barbarous warriors whose outraged spirits were waiting to wreak upon us unmentionable atrocities?

We must have gone down about twenty steps before our progress was

blocked by another door secured by two bolts, one at the top and the other at the bottom. I was able to pull both back without much trouble.

At last I was about to enter the abode of the dead!

To say that I was not afraid would be to lie. I was so frightened I could hardly stand. The terror that had gripped me in my room when I had first become aware of the ghostly visitant, returned twofold now that I was about to enter the actual death hole of his brethren, who might, for all I knew, prove even more ferocious and hostile than he.

Summoning my waning strength, I placed my shoulder against the door and pushed. It swung open with a groan.

The sight that met my eyes caused me to stand aghast: the floor of the dungeon was literally covered with human bones and skulls!

Had not Madame taken the lamp from my trembling hands, I surely would have dropped it, so overcome was I at the nauseating spectacle.

"*Mon Dieu!*" I heard her mutter, "et ees her."

She clutched my hand and pointed to a heap of rotten straw against the opposite wall a little to the right of where we stood.

One look was enough to show me that the motionless white form lying there was indeed the body of the girl I sought. The light from the smoking lamp did not reveal her clearly, but I could see that her eyes were closed. Whether she was alive or dead I did not know.

My uncertain advance toward her was suddenly, without the slightest warning, blocked by an inexorable presence I knew was before me but which I could not see. That it was antagonistic I did not doubt, and a feeling of dismay set cold shivers up my spine. A sense of overwhelming impotence assailed me. I could not pass this silent, sinister foe!

BY exerting some power, or rather influence, the Thing that stood in my path made it impossible for me to reach the unconscious girl.

It was Madame Beauchamps who saved the situation. She, too, must have sensed the unseen adversary.

"*Pour quoi?*" she whispered, "you no see if le bon Dieu weel help? Maybe He can make dis ting go way."

The simple directness of the suggestion made me realize that I had not even thought of asking the Almighty for aid against this evil spirit. I was not a religious man, in the common acceptance of the word, but, strange as it may seem, my faith in the willingness and power of God to help me in this crisis amounted to conviction that deliverance was at hand through His intervention.

I stood leaning against the wall at the bottom of the stairs, panting with emotion. Suddenly I recalled having seen a small cross about the woman's neck.

When answering advertisements

"Give me your crucifix, Madame," I said. "Perhaps this Thing will respect it."

"Ah, out!" she answered, "but eet ees not here. I leave eet upstairs."

"But we must have a cross!" I cried in desperation, now convinced that without one we were lost.

SHE did not reply. Instead, she placed the lamp on a step behind her. I watched her wonderingly. Without a word she turned completely round so that her back was toward me. Then, before I realized her intent, she had knelt down on the stone floor and raised her arms level with her shoulders. Her shadow, cast upon the ghastly white bones by the light she was facing, made an almost perfect cross!

The sight of this symbol inspired me to again face the terror with renewed confidence.

Raising my hand above my head, I spoke aloud in a steady voice: "In the name of all that is holy, I bid you begone!"

There was absolute silence. Inwardly certain, however, that all would be well, I advanced slowly toward the pile of straw on which the girl lay, my hand still raised. As I moved forward I could feel that the presence was retreating before me. I almost imagined I could hear its labored breathing. In less than thirty seconds I had the girl's still form in my arms.

Behind me I knew that one of the diabolical denizens of this accursed dungeon was employing all of its unearthly faculties in a final, terrific effort to prevent our escape. I was sublimely unafraid. My faith in the power of the Cross to defeat the evil influence of our weird enemy supplied me with the moral and physical strength to

carry the girl to safety in the face of all opposition.

Once outside the vault I called to Madame to bolt the door, which she did with a violence that seemed to shake the inn's foundations. The heroic woman, to whom I owed everything, then followed me to the kitchen.

For what seemed an eternity we labored over the seemingly lifeless girl. At last, with the aid of Madame's own cordials, she stirred with returning consciousness. But she remembered nothing; her mind was a complete blank. Only the skill of eminent specialists eventually restored the girl's reason and saved her from the awful vengeance of those savage ghouls.

A professor friend of mine, to whom I told my adventure before setting it down on paper, expressed the opinion that I was exceedingly fortunate to have had such intimate relations with "so fascinating a presence," notwithstanding its hostility. His acceptance of the occurrence as plausible and within the realms of possibility was what induced me to write my story.

He and his colleagues, for whose age and wisdom I have the greatest respect, were particularly attracted by the abduction incident, declaring that it proved conclusively that disembodied entities, despite reports to the contrary, do possess physical powers. I last saw them in the midst of a controversy concerning the exact means employed by the spectral abductor to transport the body of the senseless girl from my room to the dungeon underground.

For myself, I sincerely hope I shall never encounter another visitant from the spirit world: I am too human to be interested in the mystery enveloping the dead.

## The Inexperienced Ghost

(Continued from page 41)

in a queer, old shadowy house. Would he, after all—?

There he stood for one stupendous moment, with his arms open and his upturned face, assured and bright, in the glare of the hanging lamp. We hung through that moment as if it were an age, and then there came from all of us something that was half a sigh of infinite relief and half a reassuring "No!" For visibly—he wasn't going. It was all nonsense. He had told an idle story, and carried it almost to conviction, that was all! . . . And then in that moment the face of Clayton changed!

It changed. It changed as a lit house changes when its lights are suddenly extinguished. His eyes were suddenly eyes that were fixed, his smile was frozen on his lips, and he stood there still. He stood there, very gently swaying.

That moment, too, was an age. And then, you know, chairs were scraping, things were falling, and we were all moving. His knees seemed to give, and he fell forward, and Evans rose and caught him in his arms. . . .

It stunned us all. For a minute I suppose no one said a coherent thing. We

believed it, yet could not believe it. . . . I came out of a muddled stupefaction to find myself kneeling beside him; his vest and shirt were torn open, and Sanderson's hand lay on his heart. . . .

Well—the simple fact before us could very well wait our convenience; there was no hurry for us to comprehend. It lay there for an hour; it lics thwart my memory, black and amazing still, to this day. Clayton had, indeed, passed into the world that lies so near to and so far from our own, and he had gone thither by the only road that mortal man may take. But whether he did indeed pass there by that poor ghost's incantation, or whether he was stricken suddenly by apoplexy in the midst of an idle tale—as the coroner's jury would have us believe—is no matter for my judging; it is just one of those inexplicable riddles that must remain unsolved until the final solution of all things shall come. All I certainly know is that, in the very moment, in the very instant, of concluding those passes, he changed, and staggered, and fell down before us—dead!

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# Spirit Tales

(Continued from page 65)

enclosing letters from three correspondents in separate blank envelopes, shuffling them together, so that I myself could not know one from the other, and bring them to her to "psychometrize"—a newly coined word that was called into active service in those days. From two of these, she received only a confused impression, perhaps in consequence of their juxtaposition for an hour or more in my pocket; but of the third she said: "The magnetism of this is strong enough to overcome anything! The writer is a man, and in force and energy, a perfect steam-engine!" She then went on to describe with marvelous discrimination one of my intimate friends, Charles Graham Halpine, poet and journalist, later well known as the writer of the "Private Miles O'Reilly" *Adventures and Letters*, and Adjutant-General in our Civil War. It was a note from him that was in the envelope.

**PSYCHOMETRY** of this kind may be only a faculty of the mind, and may have nothing to do necessarily with departed spirits, but that it was not so in her case I had what seemed ample evidence. Often in reading characters in this way she would have visions of spirits that were giving her impressions, and sometimes describe the departed friends or relatives of the writers of the letters. Once I placed on her forehead a letter from my sister, Mrs. Fidelity Phelps, of Lockport, New York. After holding it there for a moment she said:

"How many sisters have you?"

"Four," I replied.

"This letter," she went on, "was written by one of them."

"Which one?" I asked.

After some hesitation she replied:

"Not the one who wrote the letter you gave me the other day" (which was a letter from my oldest sister, living in Illinois), nor the youngest. Someone says, 'Second, second'; is it your second sister?"

"Go on and describe her," I said; and she continued:

"She has black hair—dark eyes—there is something peculiar about them—she has some trouble with her eyes." After much more, which was perfectly accurate, and to the personal appearance and character of my second sister, she said that a child, a boy of about twelve years old, was present, who called the writer of the letter "Mother." That seemed the only positive error, while everything else that had been said was correct—some of it even surprisingly correct. I remarked:

"My sister never had such a child."

The medium seemed troubled for a few minutes, then replied, "He insists that he is the son of the sister who wrote this letter, and that he has been several years in the spirit world. Your father and other relatives are here with him."

Before I slept that night I wrote to my sister, relating the circumstances of the interview, even to the last apparent error. In a few days I received from

her this explanation: She had had, about twelve years before, a son that died at birth, an event of which I, an absent young brother, had, naturally enough, not been informed.

That many of Mrs. Newton's visions were merely pictures presented to her mind, or created by her own imagination, was quite certain. She herself was aware of the distinction, but insisted that the pictures were "impressions" given to her by spirit visitants, and that her own conscious volition had nothing to do with them. They were generally symbolic of some truth or some lesson to be conveyed, and were often highly poetic, even prophetic. When, in writing the novel *Martin Mercator*, I endowed the blind girl Alice with this faculty of pictorial vision, it was not fictitious fancy, but a psychological reality, attributed to the fictitious character.

In the latter part of June, 1853, I had planned a trip to the White Mountains in company with Doctor Harris, a dentist, of Worcester. Having received from him what I supposed was a final letter on the subject, I handed it to Mrs. Newton. She passed into her usual state of semi-trance, and said presently: "You will not take that trip with Doctor Harris."

To my remark that the arrangements were made and could not be changed, she answered emphatically:

"You will not take that trip with him. They say so. They do not explain why. But—" she gave a shudder—"I see a strange thing!" It was some seconds before she added—"A horrible thing! A man hanging by the neck."

I asked what that had to do with it.

"I don't know," she replied, "but it is somehow in the way of your taking the trip." And she repeated very positively: "You will not go to the mountains with Doctor Harris."

As some of her visions seemed to have no special significance, I concluded that this was one of them, but I was impressed by it, as it threatened an interruption of my plans. Two or three days afterwards I saw in the *Boston Post* this item:

"Doctor Post, a dentist of Willimantic, Connecticut, committed suicide by hanging himself to a bedpost." The coincidence of the words "Boston Post," "Doctor Post" and "bedpost" served to fix the item in my mind, although I was far from connecting it with Mrs. Newton's vision. The date of the suicide was not given, and I did not afterwards take the trouble to ascertain it, which seems now unaccountable negligence on my part, for upon that depends the question whether the vision was altogether prophetic, or merely, in the ordinary sense, clairvoyant.

MY impression had always been that the vision was received before the incident took place; and I am aware how immensely the interest of the incident would be enhanced if this point could be established. It may seem strange that I

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did not make careful investigations of such matters to their minutest details; but they had become too common in my experience to be considered worth taking trouble about, and I had no thought of ever making use of them.

It was still some days after the item appeared in the *Post* that I received a letter from Doctor Harris saying: "I find I shall not be able to take the White Mountains trip with you, for the reason that my assistant here, whom I expected to leave in charge of the office during my absence, has been called to William, to take the place of Doctor Post, who lately committed suicide."

We did not make the trip. Whether the suicide antedated the vision or not, the prediction of a circumstance concerning me, that came to pass in this roundabout way, was sufficiently curious. Some of the best of Mrs. Newton's perceptions had a prophetic character, unless we are to regard them as extraordinary coincidences; and they continued of not infrequent occurrence during many years. She now became a public medium, but she was always ready, even too ready, to "sit" for her friends, and for others whom her husband's reputation as a writer brought to the house; and I was more than once present when she gave astonishing "tests" to persons whom she had never seen before.

BEING present one evening while she was "under the influence" she saw around my head something like the halo of a saint. I questioned the appropriateness of this, when she proceeded: "It is not a halo. It is more like a planetary ring—one of the rings thrown off from the sun in the formation of the planets." After a pause she continued: "Now it is no longer a ring, but it all breaks up and comes together in a single mass; and there is another ring forming." So she described the evolution of four or five rings, one after another, each in turn condensing into a planet.

To my question as to the meaning of it all she replied:

"Your mind is the sun, and they are a series of books you are to write, all connected, belonging to one system. The first will be written very soon, and the others will follow."

I had not in mind the writing of any such books, or of any book at all at that time. But, very soon after, I was called upon most unexpectedly to write a serial story for *Our Young Folks* (a magazine that I was then editing) which satisfied readers and publishers so well that I followed it with a sequel, and that with another and so on, until I had written for *Our Young Folks* and *St. Nicholas* five serial stories, each complete in itself, but all having "Jack Hazard" for the principal character. The apparent verification of the prophecy may, of course, have been merely coincidental; but it was a pleasing fancy that the ring, in each case, corresponded with the serial publication running through the year, and that the "planet" was the volume into which the twelve numbers were duly gathered at the end.

Is there, then, a vision of the spirit, or are there invisible beings surrounding and prompting us, that "can look into

the seeds of time and say what grain is good?" Or is it all illusion? . . .

Who can tell?

## Paintings That Mirror a Tragedy

THE paintings of a dead artist are presenting a vexatious problem to the officials of the Royal Academy in London. They are the last six pictures on Charles Sims, a distinguished British painter, who committed suicide in Scotland by drowning.

Before his tragic end, Mr. Sims himself had, on two occasions, written to the officials of the Academy, earnestly urging the showing of these particular canvases. His request was soon complied with, for the paintings were of unusual merit. Since the artist's death, however, they have assumed a weird, unearthly and psychic character wholly unlike his earlier works.

## What Could This Dream Mean?

WITHOUT comment we quote the following account of a dream which Mr. Cromwell F. Varley, a prominent Englishman, reported to the London Dialectical Society.

"My sister-in-law had heart disease. Mrs. Varley and I went out to her home in the country to see her for, as we feared, the last time. Several hours after we had retired I had a nightmare and could not move a muscle. While in this state, I saw the spirit of my sister-in-law in the room, though I knew that she was confined to her bed. She said: 'If you do not move, you will die.'"

"Still I could not move, and she said: 'If you will submit yourself to me I will frighten you, and you will then be able to move.'"

"At first I objected, wishing to ascertain more about her spirit presence. When at last I consented, my heart seemed to have ceased beating. I think at first her efforts to terrify me did not succeed, but then she suddenly exclaimed: 'Oh, Cromwell, I am dying!' That frightened me exceedingly, and threw me out of the torpid state I was in, so that I awoke in the ordinary way."

"My shouting had awakened Mrs. Varley. We got up and examined the door, but it was still locked and bolted. I told my wife what had happened, having first noted the hour—3:45 a. m.—and cautioned her not to mention the matter to anybody, but to listen to her sister's version if she alluded to the subject."

"In the morning the sick woman told us that she had passed a dreadful night. She said that she had come into our room, being greatly troubled on my account, and that I had been nearly dying. 'It was between half-past three and four, when she saw I was in danger. She only succeeded in arousing me by exclaiming: 'Oh, Cromwell, I am dying!'"

"I appeared to her to be in a state which otherwise would have ended fatally."

"This was a case in which there were more witnesses than one, and may, I think, be considered a case attended with reliable evidence. There is in addition this peculiarity—that we were neither of us dead."



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